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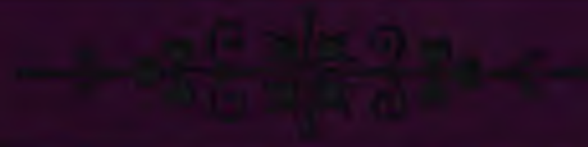
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YOUNG
BROWN
ON THE
LAW OF INHERITANCE





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YOUNG BROWN

VOL. II.

YOUNG BROWN

OR THE

LAW OF INHERITANCE

BY

THE AUTHOR OF 'THE MEMBER FOR PARIS'

'MEN OF THE SECOND EMPIRE' &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES

VOL. II.



LONDON

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BOOK III.

(Continued.)

CHAPTER X.

A LAWYER'S CLERK.

THE Marquis of Kinsgear arrived quite safely in London, and as it was a fine day he walked from the Paddington Station to Argyll Street, where Mr. Sharpe's office was situate. A nobleman of the last generation would not have done so, his own father would not have done so ; and walking the streets is by no means a custom which can be commended to persons of high rank in general, because the mud, the dust, and the wind are no respecters of persons, and a bespattered peer loses much of the grace of his appearance. However, Lord Kinsgear was not, as already stated, sufficiently conscious or mindful of his rank, and was now to learn how convenient a thing it is to carry a coronet in full view about with one upon the panels of a carriage and the buttons of servants. It saves so much time ; it makes all kinds of business go

as smoothly and pleasantly as if the wheels of life were fresh oiled, and Time had ordered new springs to his chariot.

Now the Marquis, having left his coronet behind him on the dog-cart which conveyed him from his ancestral home to the railway station at Beaumanoir, looked like any other ordinary young Englishman. He dressed very plainly, he had a slight stoop; he wore a round hat, and carried his gloves in his pocket; his fingers were not unfrequently fretted by the marks of a file, and somewhat stained with the chemical ingredients which he used in scientific experiments, really quite below the attention of a nobleman of his condition. But all this had signified nothing at Beaumanoir. If he had driven up to the station in a smock frock, or in no frock at all, his arrival would have excited the same awe-stricken sensation. The porters, and the ticket clerk, and the flymen around would have vied with each other as to which of them should first pronounce the delicious words, 'My Lord,' and offer up incense to him, a lad whose mere word could raise any one from poverty to affluence. For as soon as the boy was of age he would be offered

the chairmanship of the railway, and already there was not a director on the board who would not have given anything, everything, for a few words or a recognition in presence of society from a lad with a handle to his name: for in England, not only land, houses, and money are inherited, but respect, influence, patronage, are equally the birthright of a few persons who become eminent and powerful as soon as they are born.

Therefore, had Mr. Skipworth Sharpe's copying clerk, who was engaged in the lawyer's office and had to keep his body and soul together upon eighteen shillings a week, only known who was the commonplace young man who rang the bell which disturbed him just as he was writing down six and eightpence on a piece of blotting paper to keep his hand in, there is no knowing what the poor fellow would have done to push his fortunes. Lord Kinsgear, at that period of English history, by a word through his father to the Home Office, might have made him a commissioner or an inspector, or a superintendent of something, with twelve or fifteen hundred a year and nothing to do but what would be done for him. By a com-

pliment to the Foreign Secretary's wife or his personal friend, the Marquis could have sent him abroad as agent and consul-general to a agreeable post, with major-general's rank and two thousand five hundred a year. By ten minutes' conversation with the Colonial Minister on the eve of a contested election, the Marquis might have made the clerk governor of a rich dependency, for all these things have been done within the memory of man, and will, perhaps, be done again. Unhappily for the clerk's future peace of mind he did not know Lord Kinsgear, because that silly nobleman had not a single sign of his coronet upon or about or near him. If he had only had an acquaintance to say 'Good-bye, my lord,' or 'Where shall we meet again, Marquis?' if there had been one single solitary indication of his rank, the clerk would have been warned, and certainly would not have let his chance slip by. As there was nothing, positively nothing, the clerk stood upon his own rank, as a gentleman in a London solicitor's office, who is a citizen of no mean city; and seeing before him rather a loutish looking youth, indifferently clothed, when he opened the door he growled, 'Now then, what's

up?' and thinking he might, perhaps, do a little practical joking to relieve the tedium of business, he added, 'Is the Thames a-fire?'

'Is Mr. Sharpe at home, sir?' asked the Marquis, modestly; and he could hardly have put the question in a worse form. If you do not call a vulgar Frenchman Monsieur he will not answer you. If you call a vulgar Englishman Sir, or treat him with any semblance of respect, he is almost sure to insult you. Our commonalty like to feel the heel of the master upon their necks. So when the nobleman had made a courteous inquiry of the lawyer's clerk, the lawyer's clerk answered after the manner of his kind:

'Don't you see all these gents waiting? Aint I good enough to hear what you have got to say?'

The Marquis of Kinsgear now thought it was high time to take out his coronet, and putting a card in the hand of the clerk he answered, as if in command of his troop of horse, 'I have an appointment with Mr. Sharpe. See if he is disengaged.' Upon the card was printed in very plain characters—

*'Marquis of Kinsgear,
1st Life Guards.'*

It was only a trumpery little bit of glazed pasteboard, which a sparrow might have flicked to perdition with one stroke of its tiny wing, but if it had been a steam hammer falling suddenly on the head of the lawyer's clerk it could hardly have had a more terrible effect upon him. He staggered back as if he had been struck, became ashen white, blue, yellow, then fairly turned tail with fright and mortification, hiding his guilty remorseful head in the doorway of Mr. Skipworth Sharpe's own inner sanctuary.

The lawyer, seeing him gasp spasmodically there, called out roughly to ask what he meant by rushing in upon his privacy without knocking; and as harsh words generally act as a restorative to the nerves, this wretched clerk was sufficiently revived by his master's anger to stretch out the card silently. But he could not speak.

'Show my Lord Markis in. Deary me, who'd have thought that you should have let the Markis wait out there now? Come in, my Lord. I beg your Lordship to walk this way. I hope I see your Lordship quite well. Is his Grace the Dook in good 'elth, my Lord? This way, my Lord—this way,' cried profuse Mr. Sharpe, hastening himself forward to welcome

his noble visitor, and absolutely blossoming and opening out in the presence of a nobleman. His face shone with honest pleasure, and his full sensual mouth smiled from ear to ear. He almost quivered with excitement and satisfaction when the young man shook hands with him.

Upon the other hand that miserable clerk climbed up upon his office stool, and clutched his hair and blushed, overwhelmed with confusion in his utter abasement and grievous anguish. Meantime, the boy of eighteen years old naturally took precedence of all who were waiting. A widow lady and her son in deep mourning were hurried out of the lawyer's private room, feeling quite ashamed of being in the way of a marquis; and the other persons waiting were only a country gentleman from Devonshire in haste to catch an express train, a clergyman, a physician, a barrister, and an Indian colonel on half-pay. They all rose and bowed, feeling refreshed and invigorated by the mere sight of a nobleman of hereditary rank and dignity.

CHAPTER XI.

USURY.

ALTHOUGH Mr. Sharpe's office was located on the ground-floor of a rather dingy house, and had certainly a shabby aspect, yet there was that indescribable air about it which would have told an experienced Londoner it was connected in some way with rank, fashion, loose money transactions, great expectations, noblemen and gentlemen in want of temporary accommodation on personal security, racing, theatricals, and the opera house. Club porters, and valets, and now and then a lady's maid, were for ever coming with notes and waiting for answers. Hansom cabs drove up in hot haste, and deposited young men, who rushed out of them banging the foot-board loudly, and commonly rushed back again without their errand, Mr. Skipworth Sharpe being usually engaged at least six deep on business days. He did not reside in Argyll

Street ; and indeed it was not always easy for any one who was not in his confidence to find him when he was absent from his office. He had a habit of lending money to builders who were constructing new streets in promising neighbourhoods ; and he liked to look personally after property in which he had an interest. Whenever, therefore, any client wished to see Mr. Skipworth Sharpe, and Mr. Skipworth Sharpe wished to see him or her (which was a very different business), he made an appointment on the outskirts of civilisation, and was found located in a splendid suite of apartments, in a palace with a scaffolding still up before it. A few months or weeks afterwards that palace was generally in the occupation of a nobleman or gentleman who had been recently in pecuniary difficulties, and Mr. Sharpe had transferred his abode elsewhere. He encamped ; he did not settle in a house, and he had no need to do, for he travelled a great deal, and had extensive dealings at Epsom, Newmarket, Doncaster, Melton Mowbray, and wherever men and horses were gathered together. A hard life, perhaps, but interesting was the life of Mr. Skipworth Sharpe, and he had continued to lead it for

about thirty years without relaxation. He was enormously rich, and went on heaping up money, not in paltry guineas and six-and-eightpences, but in tens of thousands at a single haul. People who did not know him called him a Jew ; in fact he was the son of a Yorkshire gentleman's groom ; and the Yorkshire gentleman, whose name was Skipworth, had subsequently bound the boy apprentice to a shrewd Yorkshire attorney. Under the able tuition of this professional gentleman, Mr. Sharpe had early acquired a decided taste for money-getting and the clearest possible understanding of the means by which money could be made safely ; that is to say, without afterclaps or unprofitable waste of time in defending suits at law or equity. He was admitted himself, in due course, as an 'attorney gent, one ;' and his place of business was, as above described, situated within a minute's walk of the Union Bank of London on one side, and Marlborough Street Police Court on the other. It occasionally happened that Mr. Skipworth Sharpe's clients found themselves under the necessity of visiting both of these institutions before they had quite done with him. But he was not a noisy man : persons in

his walk of life seldom like a public riot ; and it frequently happened that when Mr. Sharpe's clients merely saw the police court revealed to them, at a safe distance, they did not desire to go any further in that direction, but promptly returned backwards. Besides, Mr. Sharpe only took the cream off his customers. He never lent money in small sums. He never consented to have any dealings with a nobleman or gentleman who had ever been in other hands. With such foresight and prudence he would have succeeded in any career he had chosen to follow. If he was a money-lender, it was simply because the cards of life had been dealt to him for the game of vingt-et-un—or usury. He might quite as well have been a party whip and successful politician, as Mr. Skipworth, his godfather, had been before him. He was a very good fellow ; civil, serviceable, kind. His principal weakness was an itch for high society, and he was never so happy as when he could be seen perched up in a drag or a phaeton beside a duke, a marquis, or even an earl. He had few other pleasures. The man, though fat and fond of personal adornment, was abstemious and self-denying in other respects. He took little

rest, he worked hard, he dined habitually off a plate of cold meat snatched in the intervals of money-grubbing. He had neither wife nor child, kith nor kin, that he knew of; and he, even the keen Mr. Skipworth Sharpe, was only seeing through a glass darkly, and hunting shadows, like the rest of us in this mysterious, unsubstantial world.

‘Here is the money, Markis,’ said Mr. Sharpe, ushering the Marquis to a chair, but proceeding at once to business, and he handed a cheque on the Union Bank of London to Lord Kinsgear. Mr. Sharpe banked with a joint stock bank because it allowed interest on current accounts, and he wanted no favours.

The young nobleman looked at the cheque uncertainly, and did not touch it. He felt a vague sentiment of uneasiness, and failed altogether to understand, not being yet a man of business, why he should take a cheque from Mr. Skipworth Sharpe. He did not want any money.

The lawyer seeing his embarrassment, took up the cheque again himself, and said, ‘If your Lordship will be so good as to endoss it, that is, write your name here on the back, it will be all

right. Them's your father the Dook's instructions,' added Mr. Sharpe, referring to a letter bearing the Beaumanoir postmark which he had received that morning.

Then Lord Kinsgear hesitated no longer. He knew, or thought he knew, that Mr. Sharpe was his father's friend, and he had the natural trust of a well-conditioned young man in his elders.

'Now, my Lord, all preliminaries being complete and air-tight,' observed Mr. Sharpe, who never quite lost his Yorkshire accent and stable pronunciation, 'my 'ed clerk will just run round with yer to the bank, and when you've got the money, why perhaps, Markis, you will be as good as to come back again.'

Mr. Sharpe rang for his principal coadjutor, who had been out of the way when the Marquis arrived half an hour before, and the bank being only distant a few minutes' walk, the Marquis went there, and returned very shortly. Behind him came Mr. Sharpe's confidential clerk, carrying two large canvas bags of gold.

'Ah, deary me,' cried Mr. Sharpe, cheerfully, 'your Lordship will want to get rid of all them sovereigns. 'Ere, Markis, I'll give you notes

for 'em in the twinkling of a bed-post, that's what I'll do.' And Mr. Skipworth Sharpe after counting the sovereigns, and setting the greater part of the contents of one bag aside, did indeed hand Lord Kinsgear a bundle of fresh and crisp bank-notes in exchange for the remainder.

'Tell his Grace, Marquis,' said Mr. Sharpe, 'that the rest represents my client's interest, payable in advance as agreed upon between us last week.'

'All right,' replied Lord Kinsgear, as he would have done if Mr. Sharpe had said anything else which did not certainly appear to be dictated by insanity. The young man only desired to please his father and Mr. Sharpe, and every person with whom he was brought in contact, as intelligent and single-minded young men always do. He did not know what was going on at once before his face and behind his back. He did not dream that there was ruin, perhaps ignominy in it. He had received his father's instructions, and he carried them out to the best of his ability in the innocence of his heart and the integrity of his hands.

Mr. Sharpe had also merely acted after the instincts of his tribe and generation. The large

sum of money he had advanced upon the joint security of the Duke of Courthope, the Marquis of Kinsgear, and Lord George Wyldwyl was secured as well as it could be. A cheque for the whole amount, duly endorsed, had been presented and cashed by the young Marquis, though it was of course made payable to his father. The usury, if usury there were, being deducted in advance and in gold, could not be traced, and no legal proof existed of it. Whenever, or if ever it should become necessary to take legal proceedings for recovery of the money, it would appear, on the face of the bond given as security, that it had been lent at the moderate legal interest of five per cent., and, moreover, that the money had been borrowed by the Duke of Courthope, not only with the full knowledge of his son and heir, but also apparently for his sole use and benefit, inasmuch as he had actually presented the cheque and received the money from the bank in person. Truly, this latter circumstance would not bar the plea of infancy, but it would make it somewhat more disgraceful, and even should it be set up by the future Duke of Courthope on his accession to his titles and

property, Mr. Sharpe was protected by the name of Lord George Wyldwyl, which he well knew to have been used under circumstances which constituted a breach of trust. In fact, Lord George's signature, which had been given to the Duke for one purpose, had been employed by him for another, after a custom not unfamiliar to those who, having a personal interest in view, persuade themselves most conscientiously that this interest is everybody else's interest, and that any little irregularity in attaining it can easily be explained away satisfactorily by-and-by. The Duke would have been shocked, and even incredulous, if apprised that his harmless misapplication of his uncle's signature was one of these acts which help to lodge the small fry of the world in Millbank gaol. He wished to buy a piece of land, and it was obvious that his uncle would agree (if consulted) that the possession of this piece of land was absolutely indispensable to the happiness of both—whence the use, or misuse, of the signature might be described not only as an innocent but as a most proper and thoughtful act—all the more so as Lord George need never be informed of it. Mr. Sharpe was quite ac-

customed to these forms of logic, and he had many documentary samples of them in the tin boxes about his study. But he merely used them to prevent high-spirited clients kicking him out of their houses when they were asked to pay up. Simple contract debts, bonds, bills, and promissory notes, were all things at which a high-spirited landowner with an entailed estate might afford to laugh if he was in the humour. He might go up the Nile, and make terms or not with his creditors through his family solicitor, offering them ten shillings in the pound, as Lord Highdounderry did, or nothing in the pound, like Lord Levant. But a breach of trust, or a fraudulent bond, which might pass out of Mr. Skipworth Sharpe's hands into those of an Old Bailey barrister, would be a very grim business; and the Yorkshire attorney well knew that few or none of his noble clients would give him any trouble while he held them by such a curb.

He was, therefore, in a very good humour when the business was over, and appeared sorry to part with his young friend.

'The Dook won't be up in town for two good

hours yet,' observed Mr. Sharpe, looking at his watch.

'My father is at Beaumanoir with his agent from Ireland,' said Lord Kingsgear.

'Your father, the Dook, will be at the Carlton Club by the 3.30 train. I've just got a telegram from 'is Grace, and he will be waiting for you in the mornin' room,' replied Mr. Sharpe, with rather a queer look. 'His Grace is very keen in bizziness; I often have as many as six or seven letters in the course of an afternoon, when I have anything to do for his Grace—besides,' added Mr. Sharpe, reflectively, 'besides telegrams.'

Lord Kingsgear, who was unacquainted with this phase of his father's character, could only silently acquiesce in any remark Mr. Sharpe might please to make. Then he rose to go, wondering what he should do with himself for the next two hours, when there came a knock at the door, and the unfortunate clerk, who had so missed his opportunity when he had unknowingly been face to face with the heir of two dukedoms, brought in a three-cornered note, hastily scrawled in pencil, and casting a

sidelong look of abject contrition at the Marquis, he presented it to his master.

‘By your leave, Marquis,’ said Mr. Sharpe, smiling as he cast a hasty glance at this hasty missive. Then addressing the clerk he added, ‘Tell Inspector Backhouse to inform his Worship, Mr. Krorl, that I’ll be with him in a jiffy.’

‘Good morning, Mr. Sharpe,’ said Lord Kinsgear, taking up his hat.

‘If you haven’t anythink particular to do, Marquis, should you like to see a police case? His Worship, Mr. Krorl, has just sent for me to say a female is in custody for stealing of a bank-note with my name on it. I shall be most happy to show your Lordship a little life in London,’ said Mr. Sharpe, eager to appear before a metropolitan magistrate in such good company.

The young Marquis, glad of any occupation which would relieve him from two hours waiting among the stiff and stately elderly gentlemen of the Carlton Club; and, moreover, interested at the prospect of something new, readily assented to Mr. Sharpe’s proposal, and a few minutes afterwards he and the Yorkshire attorney entered the magistrate’s court together.

CHAPTER XII.

A POLICE CASE.

MR. KRORL was a hot-headed Irishman, who had been made a metropolitan magistrate, because his uncle, a land agent, had helped to carry a contested election in the Government interest at Tipperary, and he presided over the police court in Skinpole-street, whither all cases of guilt or suspicion which happened in the Edgware-road or its immediate neighbourhood were referred for equitable decision.

We English indeed are born to fines and imprisonment, and what makes these penalties the easier to bear is the impossibility of ascertaining on what principle they are administered. Thus a man who was brought before Mr. Krorl for knocking his wife down with a poker was fined forty shillings, that is, a fortnight's wages, to the dismay of his wife who enjoyed the advantage of being starved as well as assaulted ;

whilst a person who had buffeted a vestryman was sent to gaol for three months. A boy who had passed a counterfeit shilling got six months' hard labour; and a grocer who had been poisoning his customers for time out of mind by selling counterfeit tea—that is, birch twigs and Prussian blue—escaped with a payment of five pounds. A woman with a child, who had begged, was condemned to prison for a month, and one who had not begged, but had flung herself into the Serpentine to be free from a life of hunger and penitentiaries, was sternly rebuked for her weariness of this happy world, and forwarded for a week to Pentonville to help her appreciate it better.

Some twenty cases having been disposed of and the luncheon hour having arrived, Mr. Krorl had leisure to observe Mr. Skipworth Sharpe, who was making signs to him from the body of the court. Mr. Krorl, who was a merry old gentleman and a great favourite with the legal profession, first winked at Mr. Sharpe and then jerked his thumb towards his private room, after which a constable in plain clothes opened a side-door which led through a passage, up a ricketty staircase, to an apartment where cigars,

sherry, and sandwiches were set out. Presently came Mr. Krorl, holding a newspaper in one hand, the other being thrust in the waist-band of his pantaloons, and singing in a fine Irish brogue a favourite song.

‘How are you, Sharpe, and who’s your friend?’ inquired the worthy magistrate, helping himself to a glass of sherry, and drinking it before waiting for an answer. ‘Sit down and peg away both of you if you’re peckish.’

‘Allow me, Mr. Krorl, to present you my friend, the Markis of Kinsgear, son of his Grace the Duke of Courthope and Revel,’ said Mr. Sharpe.

Mr. Krorl’s jocularitv at once departed from him, and he hastily buttoned his waistcoat, which had been open, disclosing a fine expanse of shirt-front. With his very best company manners he stuttered and said :

‘Belave me, my Lord Marquis, I’m proud to make your Lordship’s acquaintance in me humble coort. Mr. Skipworth Sharpe, sir, I’m for ever beholden to you for having introduced so distinguished a guest to the Binch, whereon the laws of the counthry are administered to the best of me abilitee.’

The honest magistrate shook hands with Mr. Sharpe, whilst the moisture of gratitude, sherry, and emotion started to his eyes. He was a good fellow where a nobleman was concerned, and was a sincere sycophant at heart. Nature had given him the serviceable soul of a servant. The man was not to be blamed for qualities which belonged to him, and were as much part of his being as perfume belongs to the rose and heat comes of fire.

‘Did your Worship wish to see me?’ now asked Mr. Sharpe, jealous lest Krorl should take too large a share of *his* nobleman’s attention, and desirous of putting a period to the magistrate’s adulation of hereditary rank, which, so to say, jostled and interfered with his own.

‘I did, sure,’ replied his Worship. ‘There’s a female, Mr. Sharpe, is goin’ to be brought up before me for stealin’ a bank-note from ye; at laste, your name’s on the back of the bank-note, and ye may know something about it. Ye’ll be sworn presently.’

Mr. Krorl now returned to his magisterial duties, Lord Kinsgear and Mr. Sharpe were accommodated with seats on the bench : though,

properly speaking, Mr. Sharpe, as a witness, should have been made to wait outside; but these formulæ are for small fry not large. The case of 'Margaret Brown' was then called by the usher of the court, and Madge was placed at the bar, charged with being in unlawful possession of a bank-note, and with having assaulted and beaten policeman X. 1000, who presently appeared to bear witness with a saddle of sticking-plaster on the bridge of his nose. Madge was very pale from her recent accident, but out of danger. She had been well tended in hospital; and, at the news of her trouble, Tom Brown had hurried up bewildered from Wakefield with honest Harry Jinks and Mr. Mowledy, all of whom had sought to comfort her. Between them, too, they had put her case into the hands of one of those numerous pettifogging attorneys who haunt police courts—Mr. Wissle, the collar of whose coat was greasy, and his linen none of the cleanest; his pepper-and-salt hair refused to lie down straight but stood up bristling; and he took his seat at the solicitor's table with as formidable a heap of papers as if he were going to defend all Newgate by himself instead of but one prisoner. He was the only

man Mr. Mowledy knew of, and indeed he had introduced himself to Mr. Mowledy, Mr. Mowledy had not sought *him*.

‘Stand with your face towards his Worship, carn’t ye?’ growled a gruff policeman, taking Madge roughly by the arm and swinging her round.

The magistrate who presided over this court with so much decorum then, according to his custom, unbuttoned his waistcoat again, and began walking backwards and forwards, now taking a book in his hand apparently with the intention of consulting it, and now noisily dashing it down unopened; now bawling to the pettifogging attorney, Mr. Wissle, that he was mad, and now entering into animated conversations with his clerk, the usher, and various policemen. Mr. Slopgood, the prosecutor, having been introduced, Mr. Krorl shouted to him to pull off his glove; then bade him look at the Bench and not at his solicitor, and in fact so frightened Mr. Slopgood, who was a mild person not used to be bullied, that this draper inwardly regretted his precipitancy in having handed Madge over to the police. It was the first and last time of his voluntary appearance

in any court of justice, thought Mr. Sloggood, desperately, for Mr. Krorl actually threatened to turn him out for sneezing.

Mr. Sloggood, however, having humbly apologised through his solicitor, the worshipful magistrate consented to be pacified, and simply ordered him not to do it again. Then the case fairly proceeded. Mr. Sloggood stated all he knew, his pushing young men followed suit and repeated all they knew, and Policeman X. 1000 not only deposed to what *he* knew but to what he had experienced, and described the injuries to his nose with much feeling. Then Mr. Jiddledubbin, the maker of wind instruments, was hustled, puffing, into the witness box, and given a slippery New Testament to kiss. But he was not the Jiddledubbin who had lost the note. This original Jiddledubbin had been dead for some years, and lay buried in a city church-yard deeply regretted by his kinsfolk and acquaintances. The present Jiddledubbin was son to the first, and a pompous, valuable man who had invented a new sort of key-bugle. He swore that his name was Joel, that he was forty-five and a householder, and remembered his father, Amos Jiddledubbin, losing some

bank-notes eighteen years ago and being much concerned about them. He, Joel, was away from home at the time of this disaster, but he recollected the circumstance because he had just thought then, for the first time, of his new key-bugle. He was commencing a description of this key-bugle, when Mr. Wissle sternly checked him by leaping up and shouting in great excitement: 'I'll have no quibbling here, sir, from you or from anybody.'

Mr. Wissle, who bustled about all the while with a stump of a pencil, taking notes, had successfully and vigorously cross-examined Mr. Slopgood, the pushing young men, and Policeman X. 1000, and run them each and every one into dilemmas and fixes. Having got hold of Mr. Jiddledubbin, he now brought him to book as follows:

'Now, sir, look at me, and remember where you are. No, sir, not that way—this way—straight at me; you needn't be afraid that I shall eat you' (Mr. Wissle was half Mr. Jiddledubbin's size). 'Now take that note and tell me upon your oath, yes or no, will you swear that this note was ever in your father's possession?'

‘I wish to remark,’ replied Mr. Jiddledubbin, a little astonished.

‘We want none of your remarks, sir,’ interrupted Mr. Wissle, with great savageness. ‘You are not here to make remarks. Your remarks would, I dare say, be little worth hearing at any time, but least of all in a court of justice. I’ll have no evasions, sir. Now, sir, yes or no?’

‘I fancy——’ stammered Mr. Jiddledubbin in perplexity.

‘Yes or no?’ shrieked Mr. Wissle, striding forward till his bloodshot little face was within a foot of Mr. Jiddledubbin’s arms, whereat Mr. Juddledubbin’s wrath bubbled within him, for this treatment was quite novel, and maybe he had an itching to bring down one of his musical fists on Mr. Wissle’s countenance. But he thought better of it, and, in a voice that cracked right in the middle from indignation, screamed:

‘No!’

‘That will do, sir. Not a word more. Hold your tongue, sir, and stand down. And now, your Worship,’ added Mr. Wissle, turning with an air of triumph, whilst Mr. Jiddledubbin almost choking from exasperation was elbowed

away behind the crowd, 'I submit that there is no case whatever to go before a jury. Witnesses have quite failed to bring any evidence of robbery against my client, who was given into custody with indecent haste, in order no doubt that these tradesmen, Slopgood and Jiddledubbin, might have the opportunity of advertising their shops at the expense of your Worship's time and patience. I know such tricks, sir, and delight to expose them. Yes, sir, don't attempt to bully me' (this to Mr. Slopgood, who, slinking behind his solicitor, looked anxious to be gone and far remote from bullying anybody), 'I am prepared, if your Worship thinks fit, to bring witnesses as to character of my client—a virtuous and modest wife and mother, who had never, till this day, been defiled by the breath of calumny. But I trust your Worship will at once dismiss the summons on the first count, and allow me to proceed with the charge of assault, which I will dispose of in five minutes.'

But Mr. Krorl thought differently. The evidence was not strong, but several bank-notes had been stolen along with this one—it was, in short, 'a great bank-note robbery'—and 'Providence' was ever on the look-out to see that

persons like Mr. Jiddledubbin should have their lost goods restored to them, no matter whether it were eighteen or eighty or eighteen hundred years after the loss. Thieves would do well to bear this in mind, and to think for ever of the sure foot of justice. Accordingly, Mr. Sharpe stepped into the witness box and had the note shown him.

Mr. Sharpe was not a man to be browbeaten by Mr. Wissle, as Mr. Wissle well knew. He turned the note over, and at once laid his finger on the flaw of the case, which nobody had done before him.

‘Nothing proves,’ said he, ‘that this is note 00012345. You have been taking too much for granted. The last two figures are burned out’ (this was indeed true, for the Bank of England having sent the note to a learned professor to remove the stain, that learned professor had instantly burned a hole through the note with some acid). ‘My name and private marks are here,’ added Mr. Sharpe, using a double eye-glass to reconnoitre the back. ‘The marks refer to some entry in my ledgers. If your Worship will allow me to send to my office, one of my clerks shall bring me the

ledger for the year in question, and we shall see at once to whom the note was given. I know nothing of Mr. Jiddledubbin,' saying which, Mr. Sharpe scribbled some words on a card and handed them to a policeman, then walked out of the witness box, glancing not unkindly at Madge. Mr. Sharpe kept, from prudential motives, a minute entry of all the notes he gave away in his money-lending capacity, and none of his ledgers were ever destroyed. He guessed at first sight that Madge was not guilty of theft, and had inwardly determined that she should not be convicted, even if he himself had to provide means for her defence. It did not suit him that one about whom he knew so much as Madge, and who, by reason of those family claims which she herself ignored, could be so held up *in terrorem* over the Duke of Courthope, should be discredited by anything of a criminal nature.

But whilst the policeman was away fetching Mr. Sharpe's clerk and ledger, Mr. Wissle produced his first witness as to character—Mr. Mowledy. Now Mr. Wissle having pressed exceedingly sore on Messrs. Jiddledubbin and Slopood, it was quite natural that the counsel

for the prosecution should retaliate by weighing hard on Mr. Mowledy. There is not much in a charge of theft against a peasant woman ; but there is a great deal in the vanity of two gentlemen of the law arrayed against each other, and it was urgent that ambitious Mr. Rushout, who conducted the prosecution, should not let such a one as Mr. Wissle get in any way the best of him. Mr. Rushout was a young barrister just budding into Old Bailey practice, thanks to his uncle, the solicitor to Mr. Sloggood, who sent him many briefs. He was a blustering young lawyer, with red whiskers, a broad chest, and lungs like leather. The better to show his great talent, it was his custom to affect at starting a tone of bluff good humour, and his attempts to this end much resembled the efforts of an elephant trying to dance among eggs ; but by-and-by, if thwarted, his natural ferocity came uppermost, and he would rave and blackguard, as only lawyers are privileged to do. That is an edifying tradition, one may remark, which allows the exponents of the law to adopt a language and manners which would be tolerated from no other men, either in public or private. If a person not versed in law were to speak as

certain counsel do, he would be taught somewhat roughly the uses of civility ; but barristers are shielded by the excellent plea that they act 'professionally,' in other terms, because it pays them.

'So you call yourself a clergyman of the Church of England?' asked Mr. Rushout with rasping blandness of Mr. Mowledy. 'May I enquire, sir, when and where you were ordained, and what proofs you can adduce that you are not here to protect the prisoner from the consequences of a felony?'

Mr. Mowledy replied that there was a gentleman upon the bench, namely, Mr. Sharpe, who could testify to his sacred character.

'Ah!' said Mr. Rushout, somewhat put out, and yet raising his voice more angrily from being compelled to go on a new tack. 'Well, Mr. Mowledy, I ask you to declare that you know no one single act in the prisoner's life which could warrant the inference that she is now guilty. Remember, sir, that if mercy is a fine thing, truth is a better, and that you are here to speak the whole truth, without reticence or equivocation.'

To the wonder of poor Madge, who had

been attending to all the proceedings without understanding them, and to the utter consternation of Tom Brown, who stood ruefully near the dock, the Curate hesitated at the roar of Mr. Rushout's voice and the glare of his fierce eyes. He had eyes like those of a ferret, had Mr. Rushout, and they looked red as if on fire in certain lights. Though but fresh in practice, he had already made thieves and murderers quail beneath their baneful glance, and he now confounded the high and gentle soul of Mr. Mowledy.

‘I ask you to state on your oath as a Christian minister, sir, that you know nothing against the character of this woman, who has been delivered over to justice by a public spirited and highly respected tradesman, my client, Mr. Sloggood?’

Mr. Mowledy looked sadly down; he remembered the address which he had written to a letter, of which he afterwards discovered by accident (for there is no such thing as a secret) that John Giles had no knowledge. He recollected the sad scene by the mill-stream that night eighteen years ago, and a horrible doubt passed across his mind that Madge might be guilty.

‘Can’t you speak now?’ cried Mr. Krorl, looking surprised.

‘No, no, sir; just you stand back there,’ bellowed Mr. Rushout violently to Mr. Wissle, whom he caught making signals. ‘We don’t want you to prompt the witness; he is quite old enough to speak for himself. Now Mr. Mowledy, sir, am I to wait here till next Long Vacation?’

Still Mr. Mowledy was silent, and Mr. Rushout appealed to the Bench to insist upon an answer.

‘I cannot reply to a question which I have no means of answering with complete truth,’ said Mr. Mowledy with quiet self-respect. ‘Still,’ added he, with some solemnity, ‘I am convinced the prisoner is innocent.’

‘Stand down, sir,’ laughed Mr. Rushout, ‘if that was all you had to say, Mr. Wissle need scarcely have troubled himself to bring you up from Wakefield. You have evidently something on your mind, and your face tells a tale against the prisoner as damaging as any I could urge. You may go, sir!’ And, thus contemptuously dismissed, Mr. Mowledy went; nor did Mr. Wissle try to stop him, conceiving that there

must be some awkward passage in his client's history which might come out if this over conscientious priest were allowed to tarry longer. So Mr. Mowledy slowly left the court, feeling that he had done Madge harm instead of good, and yet not perceiving what else he could have said or done consistently with his duty. He was so confused that he did not notice a hobbledehoy clerk who brushed by him, holding a folio ledger clasped to his breast as if it were a baby.

This ledger was Mr. Sharpe's, and was handed up to that gentleman in his place on the bench beside Lord Kinsgear. He opened it at once, turned down a leaf, and uttered something like a whistle. 'Whew, what a singular coincidence—why I paid this note to his Grace, your Lordship's father, at Newmarket eighteen years ago!' Then beckoning to the magistrate, and speaking in a whisper: 'This is a mistake, Krorl,' he said. 'The note was probably given to the woman when she was still a girl by the Dook of Courthope, and it won't do to let his name appear in the case. Besides, it ain't the note that was stolen; it's number 00012321—here; see the entry and the marks corresponding.'

The magistrate thus enlightened brought down the book, which he then held in his right hand, with a loud thump on the desk.

‘This turns out to be a mistake,’ he exclaimed. ‘Mr. Sharpe here proves that this note is not the one that was stolen, and Mr. Rushout, sir, I should just advise your clients to be more careful how they prefer charges another time, or maybe there’ll be an action for false imprisonment lying against them some of these days. The charge of theft is dismissed.’

There then remained the case of assault to be disposed of, but the complexion of this was altered by the fact that Madge was an innocent woman who had resisted an unjustified aggression. Nevertheless, as she had positively struck Policeman X. 1000, who, as representing the majesty of the law, should have been sacred to her in his person and proceedings, she was fined forty shillings with costs.

On this sentence being pronounced, the Marquis of Kinsgear tugged Mr. Sharpe gently by the cuff and said : ‘I feel much sympathy for that poor woman, and should like to pay her fine, as well as indemnify her relatives for

the expense they have incurred in coming up to town and getting her defended. I consider myself in some way indebted to her, for it was through a note given her by my father that she fell into this trouble. At the same time,' added this young nobleman, with his grave good sense, 'it is not right the policeman should suffer, so perhaps you will kindly give him five pounds without saying from whom;' and, fumbling for his pocket-book, Lord Kinsgear handed Mr. Sharpe three five pound notes.

CHAPTER XIII.

A GRAND CONNECTION.

It is a very small world we live in ; and those who have once met upon it are nearly certain to meet again. They generally find that in some mysterious way their lives run in parallel grooves ; and even what are called chance meetings do not appear to be the result of accident when examined by the light which subsequent events and experience reflect upon them. On the contrary, they are almost invariably shown to be but a part of the great and awful design which formed our being and our fortunes. For three successive generations, perhaps for thirty, these Wyldwyls and Browns had always met, and there had been peril in the meeting for the latter, and the peril had always passed away. If the Wyldwyls were the evil genii of the Browns, some more powerful influence than theirs must have been constantly at

work to counteract and render them harmless. They always appeared in the shape of riches and pleasure; the Browns always appeared in the guise of poverty and shame. The riches and pleasure both vanished like the unsubstantial visions of a dream, so did the shame, though not the poverty: *that* remained. The Wyld-wyls were perhaps but the eternal type of the nobles; the Browns of the people. It is always ill for the reaping-hook to cross blades with the sword, and how shall the field flower stand up against the scythe?

When Mr. Mowledy left the police court in Skinpole Street, which was presided over by Mr. Krorl, the position of the Browns seemed to his grieving mind desperate. He had not been in court when Mr. Sharpe gave his evidence as to the note and called attention to the doubtfulness of its number, so there seemed to him the strongest probability that Madge would be committed for trial; and considering the effect which imprisonment might have upon her, in the ailing state of her health, this committal might be tantamount to a sentence of death. Mr. Mowledy saw no hope for her, for she had not—nor would make—any clear defence. She

did not know the name of the person who had given her the ten pound note, and declined stating any of the circumstances connected with her possession of it. It seemed to Mr. Mowledy, when he listened to her, that there was some secret shame attached to the money. She blushed when it was mentioned to her, and though Mr. Mowledy, thoughtfully weighing her case, did not think her guilty, yet there was a mystery in the matter which he could not fathom. Had Madge's explanations, however, been satisfactory to him, they might not have seemed so to a jury; and she had no funds to provide for a legal defence of the best sort.

It is one of the beauties of justice, so called, that any rich person may bring a charge against a poor person, and support it by so strong an array of legal talent that the poor person may be crushed, however guiltless. It is not sufficient to have done no wrong to escape punishment and annihilation at the hands of a rich opponent; it is necessary to possess means to pay lawyers' costs and fee barristers of equal ability to your opponent's attorney and counsel, in order to set up a legal defence which shall stand a practised legal attack conducted with

consummate skill by men who have determined, for the sake of their professional reputation, to win the opponent's case, whether it be a righteous or an unrighteous one. It is a queer truth, but it nevertheless is a truth, that if Madge had been committed on this false charge, no firm of attorneys who meant to deal fairly by her could have undertaken to see her safe through her troubles unless a sum of about one hundred guineas had been paid them for preliminary expenses, and a counsel fit to cope with Mr. Rushout might then have required other fifty guineas to tackle the jury in real earnest. This, with other expenses such as bringing up witnesses, would have brought up the total very soon to two hundred guineas; and if all that Madge and her friends possessed had been sold it would not have realised such a sum, after long delays and wearisome endeavours to dispose of it.

Mr. Mowledy mused very anxiously upon this aspect of his parishioner's predicament. He knew something about law costs, for his elder brother had been ruined by claiming an estate as heir-at-law. He was unquestionably entitled to it, but a richer claimant having

started up to contest his claim, and he not having at once yielded all points at issue, because convinced that his claim was founded on right and equity, why the richer claimant had ruined him by appeals in the usual way. After this Mr. Mowledy and his family had felt their faith in the law as an instrument of justice very much shaken, and although Mr. Mowledy did not for his part publish his dissent for scriptural reasons set forth in the fifth chapter and the eighth verse of the book of Ecclesiastes, still he acted silently on his experience, which is more than most men do.

Several circumstances, however, had in early life come under Mr. Mowledy's observation, which convinced him that the most potent thing in England is private influence. So when he saw how utterly hopeless Madge's case would be from the legal point of view, he considered whether there was no friend to whom he could appeal on behalf of his parishioner, in order to save her if, as he still hoped, she was innocent.

Mr. Mowledy had, like most of us, a grand connection. Sir Mowledy-Bagge-Dowdeswell-Mowledy was his cousin by his mother's side, and the good man had reverently preserved the

genealogy of his family inscribed upon the tablets of his heart. The Right Honourable Baronet was a member of Parliament, a Cabinet Minister, and a gentleman of good estate in Cheshire. He had married a daughter of Earl Lobby, the Lady Selina Welbore, whose family, having inherited considerable Parliamentary influence, had opened the doors of office to him, and he lived in Hanover Square, which is a sort of border-land between rank and fashion on the one hand, and professional not to say commercial life upon the other. Noblemen still live there, but so do dentists, and a few of the higher class of shopkeepers.

Mr. Mowledy easily found out the address of his relative by consulting the *Court Guide*, for it was printed there as in some twenty other books. Yes, there it was; not indeed under the letter 'M,' as Mr. Mowledy with not unnatural pride expected, but under the letter 'D,' Mr. Mowledy's grand connection having taken the additional surname of Dowdeswell by royal license, and registered the Dowdeswell coat of arms, duly quartered, on his own at some expense in the Heralds' College. His name therefore stood in the *Court Guide* and similar

works of reference as 'Dowdeswell, Mowledy, Right Honourable Sir Mowledy Bagge, Bart., P.C., L.L.D., F.R.S., 131, Hanover Square; Mowledy Hall, Cheshire; Dowdeswell Castle, Suffolk; Bagge Hall, Cumberland. Secretary of State for Mundane Affairs, &c. &c. &c. (5,000*l.*).'

The Curate wended his way rather sadly to the town mansion of his grand connection, and rang the bell, because there was no knocker, a knocker being a noisy thing which might disturb ministerial reflections or repose. The door was opened by a servant of grave and decorous aspect, who gave a civil answer, not precisely because he was paid a fair wage and well kept for doing so, but because he was just then expecting a place as messenger at the Mundane Office, a sinecure much desired by persons of his class in life, and he was therefore especially anxious to give no cause of offence to his master or the public till he had got what he wanted, and would have no reason to be civil to either of them any longer.

The reply which the Minister's servant gave to the Curate was briefly this: 'Sir Mowledy is not at home, sir.' Indeed, the Right Honourable

Baronet never was at home at three o'clock in the afternoon, as the Curate would have known had he been a beneficed clergyman residing in London and on the look out for a deanery.

'When is Sir Mowledy expected home?' asked the poor Curate of the grave and reverend servant.

'I can't say, sir,' replied the man, considering it well to practise official reserve by times.

'When am I most likely to find him at home?' the Curate then inquired.

'Sir Mowledy never sees hennywun without a hinterfew, sir. You must rite for a hinterfew,' replied the Minister's man, authoritatively.

'If you will allow me to step into the hall for a moment, I will write for an interview now,' replied the Curate. 'My business is of a pressing nature, and I—I (the good man blushed and paused)—I am a connection—a distant, a very distant relative of Sir Mowledy.' The Curate did not look like a begging-letter writer, or an impostor, or a person who desired to obtain admittance to the ministerial baronet's house for any felonious or improper purpose; but the dignified servant evinced no signs of

letting him pass the door. The last poor relation he had seen was a distant connection of Lady Selina. He had called for a Government appointment, and had made a riot in the hall because it had not been given to him there and then. The grave and reverent servant had seen several poor relations in the families which he had served, and their visits had never been welcome to his masters or mistresses. Mr. Mowledy did not appear rich. There was very little nap upon his hat, and his well-brushed black coat looked whitish at the seams. So the grave and reverent servant was about to put on a severe aspect, when the Curate remembered his Oxford experience, and putting his hand into his pocket drew out half-a-crown, which he handed to his grand connection's porter with a short and plain order for pen and ink, which were at once brought. The half-crown now has replaced the shilling; it is the British Talisman, and sacred in the eyes of every Englishman: as is the Almighty Dollar beyond the seas.

CHAPTER XIV.

PRIVATE INFLUENCE.

THE Curate had just penned a brief and manly request for an immediate interview with his grand connection, and was about to address it, when a latch-key was put almost noiselessly into the lock of the street door, and a soft rather weary voice, which had nevertheless a tone of command in it, said, 'Have there been any calls or letters to-day, James?'

'Yes, Sir Mowledy, there has,' replied the servant, indicating a heap of cards and letters on the hall table by a respectful inclination of the head—and then he also indicated the Curate, who looked up, and his grand connection, colouring slightly, advanced and very cordially shook hands with him.

The Minister was a pale, fair, tired man, who wore his hat so far back on his head that it seemed to rest upon his shoulders, and who

had a mooning rather disconsolate gait. He was not more than five or six and thirty, but he was quite bald, and his fair delicate complexion seemed withered. He looked like a man who had been blighted, or who had never come to complete maturity. His manners were at once earnest and absent. He tried with all his strength to understand any question which was brought before him, although it might be of the most serious and complicated nature. His misfortune was that he had not much strength whether of mind or body, and therefore finding it usually impossible to master the facts and circumstances to which his attention was called, his attention wandered away, and he began to muse, poor gentleman, on what he was going to have for dinner ; on his grapes and peaches, of which he grew very fine kinds at one of his country houses ; or on the probability of his wife scolding him if he was not home for afternoon tea.

‘Come into the library,’ said the Minister to his kinsman, with that perfect conventional ease and simplicity which marks a gentleman. ‘I am glad to see you. You must dine with us on Sunday if you stay in town. It is the only day

we have a family meeting.' The Minister was really glad to see his relation, and would, if he had had energy enough, have served him very readily: for they had been old schoolfellows at Winchester, though the Curate had been on the foundation of that noble college, and the baronet's heir had felt rather ashamed of him till he knew better.

The village clergyman explained his errand in the strong simple language natural to him. He told his kinsman how the physician in attendance at one of the great London hospitals had received poor Madge, when she was taken there a few weeks ago; and having found out who she was, had written to him as incumbent of her parish, and therefore her natural protector, *ex officio*. He said that he had known her and all her family for many years, and had never seen or heard any evil of them, had never suspected anything doubtful but upon two occasions many years before; and even then nothing had arisen to confirm his suspicions; that he believed Madge to be a thoroughly honest and blameless woman, who was certainly the mainstay of her humble household, and that if she were wrongfully condemned, owing to any error

or miscarriage of justice, her husband and children would drift away into ruin also.

It was almost touching to see how painfully the Minister tried to comprehend him as he spoke. Sir Mowledy drew his chair quite close up to the Curate's chair, so that their knees almost touched ; and once or twice he laid his hand upon the Curate's shoulder, as if to establish a more perfect magnetic current between them. It was of no use, the Right Honourable Baronet could not change his nature, and before the Curate's simple story was half told, his mind was far away on the southern wall of the Cheshire garden, where his peaches grew. Had he been a man of any strength of mind or vigour of character, of course he would not have been a Minister of State in those times. We must take people as we find them, and when we look for power in a Constitutional country, where all the envies, hatreds, and jealousies of mankind conspire against wisdom and reason, we may be sure to find it very near to mediocrity. Sir Mowledy would have made an admirable gardener, he made a still better British Privy Councillor and Secretary of State. When the Curate had done speaking, Sir Mow-

ledy looked up with that agreeable and amiable smile which had so often disarmed an adversary in the House of Commons, and said, good-naturedly, 'What's the matter?'

'I want your help,' answered Mr. Mowledy : 'I ask you as Minister for Mundane Affairs, and therefore practically invested with the Crown's prerogative of mercy, to look into this case yourself, to sift the evidence thoroughly, remembering all which I, upon my honour and conscience, and between friends and kindred, have said to you ; and I pray you to give such weight to my appeal as shall not suffer the innocent to be condemned, or as shall temper justice with pity.'

'Of course,' replied the Minister, catching at words which he read in petitions at least a dozen times a day. 'Appeals for justice and pity are deserving of the best consideration of the Government at all times ; but,' he added, with an air of quiet wisdom very becoming, and which he had lately learned from an actor at Covent Garden theatre, 'I am in some doubt whether I, with the most entire desire to comply with your request, can venture so far upon my ministerial functions as to interfere

in any way whatsoever in my official capacity with a business which is,' he thought for a minute for a phrase in use at his office, and then added gently, 'which is strictly within the competence of her Majesty's judges.'

'Can you give me absolutely no hope?' asked the Curate, dispirited by this new view of the case, which sounded so reasonable, and which was so heart-breaking. 'I entreat you to consider this poor ignorant woman, without friends or money; and nevertheless, as I truly believe, a helpless victim, caught in a tangled web of circumstantial evidence which cannot be unravelled without much aid and succour.'

The Minister shook his head with mild disapproval, to show he took an interest in the conversation, and he bent courteously forward to listen more intently. In fact, he was thinking whether his tea-cake that afternoon would be buttered with some Brittany butter which he had ordered as he walked down to his office in the morning.

'Give me a probability that the magistrate's decision will, at all events, be revised by some competent authority,' pleaded the Curate.

‘Come, come up to tea, and let me present you to Lady Selina. We can talk of this melancholy business afterwards,’ answered the Minister, bringing the interview blandly to a close, for he was hungry and really anxious about his Brittany butter. The Curate’s last words had, therefore, fallen on his ear like strokes of lead upon sponge, leaving no echo.

So the good clergyman, who was not a man of the world, and did not know how to force an advantage or extort a promise, even when fortune had given him that rare and precious thing, an opportunity, followed his grand connection up the handsomely carpeted stairs which led to Lady Selina’s tea-table and boudoir. There he found assembled almost all the female magpies in London whose mates or relations wanted anything from the Mundane Office. Poor magpies! Sir Mowledy could give them nothing; but they persisted in thinking otherwise, and Lady Selina was not sorry to keep up the delusion, for she had married two daughters and a niece upon it.

Her Ladyship received Mr. Mowledy very graciously, being far too expert and well trained

a hostess, and also too great a lady, to be ashamed of her husband's poor relation ; and feeling, as all noble ladies do, a deep and sincere respect for any member of the Church, however poverty stricken, who conducted himself decorously. She knew everything too : all the great London ladies do ; for there is assuredly a noble road to learning, which is perpetual gossip. She had heard many good accounts of Mr. Mowledy ; and also the terrible story about fermented liquor, which she now saw, by one glance at that pale, grand face of his, was and must be a slander. Therefore Lady Selina placed him beside her at the tea-table, and spoke, as great ladies only can speak, to him ; but he soon found it was impossible for him to plead his cause with her while all those magpies were screaming and fluttering around. Presently, too, the Minister, after reading a telegram from the Government whip, hurried suddenly off to the House of Commons, so that the Curate could not get another word with him ; and as Lady Selina asked her sister, Lady Lobby, to take her down to Westminster to hear the great debate on the Nonending question, which

was to come forward that night, the Curate took his departure, and found himself in the street as the sun went down, having achieved no practical result at all by the efforts he had made.

‘There is nothing left but prayer,’ thought the good man very solemnly, and he offered up a silent supplication for help and counsel to the King of Kings.

CHAPTER XV.

ABADDON.

MR. MOWLEDY was not a man who could persuade his conscience to abandon a duty because difficulties came in his way while doing it. For whosoever in this world purposes to accomplish any good thing shall always find difficulties arise and confront and war with him. If we had in these times the smallest faith in that which we profess to believe, and if we were not decorous Pharisees, who take the Divine word indeed into our mouths but put it sacrilegiously away from our hearts and understandings, we should be willing to acknowledge that the leader of the opposition, or, in other words, the Devil, is a real presence upon earth, and not merely a bogey invented with horns and hoofs to frighten children. One of his names is Satan, which signifies in the plain homely language of holy writ, that we find

it so hard to comprehend, merely an 'Adversary, or an Accuser in a court of justice.' His more common name of Devil comes from the Greek Diabolos, which also means a calumniator, and he is called a serpent because he is exceeding wise, crafty, and subtle. He can take any shape, that of friend or foe: of friend to cajole or mislead; of foe to frighten or to fight; for the Psalms compare him to a dog, and dogs will bite. Mr. Mowledy had seen him thrice in one day: as a fowler in Mr. Rushout; as a dog in Mr. Krorl; and as an adder hidden under the kind words and inanities of his grand connection.

His title, which is the Tempter, implies his constant practice. He is for ever on the watch to catch us. He is surprisingly artful, lying in wait for us, and waylaying our very virtues in unsuspected places, and whispering profit, pleasure, rest, or decency, good manners, politeness. 'Hold, enough, thou well doer! Forbear to do good—for propriety's sake!' is a frequent form of his persuasive eloquence in London society. It is related of him that once in the country of the Gadarenes he threw a young man who was bent on a good errand bodily down, and tore

him ; it was therefore only according to his nature that he should try to trip up Mr. Mowledy. Many, as the Curate knew, he has cast into prison, being come down to us having power ; so that Madge was in no visionary danger, because, in all probability, she was innocent, and therefore had the Tormentor, the Prince of Darkness, the very God of this World himself for an enemy.

Now Mr. Mowledy being by no means a Pharisee, but a prayerful Christian man, who saw with his eyes and heard with his ears whatsoever had been written aforetime for his instruction, had seldom any hesitation in recognising the Devil when he saw him. He knew the Evil One instantly, and exorcised him silently, having specially in his mind the sixth, seventh, and eighth verses of the fourth chapter of St. Luke, as he walked meditating through the London streets in the eventide. Having thought for some time very intently on these three verses of the Gospel according to St. Luke, he remembered the eleventh verse of the fourth chapter of St. Matthew, in which the wondrous story of a great temptation, and a great resistance to it, is beautifully rounded off and perfected.

As he mused upon these things with a pure and single heart, taking Heaven's light only for his guide through the Slough of Despond, he suddenly thought of Dr. Porteous, who had cheated him the last time they met out of some small change, and who had often defrauded or overreached him in mean and shabby ways. As he wondered how the remembrance of such a man should recur to him at such a time; he seemed to hear a still small voice, which spake to him and said, 'Thy judgments are far above out of our sight. My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.' When the still small voice had ceased speaking to him, Mr. Mowledy directed his steps steadily towards Melina Place, Lambeth; turning neither to the right hand nor to the left, for he felt that he was the appointed bearer of a message.

CHAPTER XVI.

POWER.

THE Curate found the Rector of the rich hereditary benefice of Wakefield-in-the-Marsh perusing the 'Morning Post' newspaper in his dingy parlour within the rules of the King's Bench prison. His attention was directed to the column of fashionable intelligence, and he was reading a glowing account of the festivities which were then celebrating the majority of his nephew by his mother's side, Minto Petty-Pells, Lord Hanaper. There was a strong smell of Hodges' cordial gin and boiling water, mingled with the odours of departed Irish stew, about the Doctor's apartments, and the wife or sister he led about was now clothed, and in her right wig, drinking in the highly-titled names which Dr. Porteous pronounced aloud with much unction and some family pride. She, too, was proud of those illustrious personages, though their splendour

only shed a reflected or second-hand light upon her; but she knew that her washerwoman who came once a fortnight, and the beer-boy who came thrice a day, and the muffin-man, and the milk-woman would all respect her more when they read in the 'Weekly Dispatch,' or the 'Sunday Times,' or 'Lloyd's Newspaper,' how Dr. Porteous had been a guest at Minto Court, and did not read that the reverend gentleman had only obtained a day rule (by purchase of the marshal of his prison-house) to enable him to be present, and had returned to his place of durance, as in duty bound, at night. She was, therefore, upon her best behaviour. She made the Doctor's gin-and-water with taste and judgment; she cut just the proper quantity of lemon-peel into it; and, as she stood behind him, resting upon the back of his chair and looking down over his shoulder, a something, that had once been beauty and grace, came like the light of other days into her countenance and lingered there—the very faded ghost of loveliness. There was a time when she had not been a shrieking virago, hot of temper, easily provoked, and fierce of speech. A tradesman's daughter thirty years ago, she had been taught

the piano and how to hold a silver fork ; and in several respects had been well fitted for a fortune or a hospital. But her father had invested in a farm the savings of his business, which was that of a hatter in Bond Street, and when he died intestate, leaving only this freehold property, his son took everything, and she was left a high-spirited girl, with nothing but a taste for the piano and silver forks. By-and-by she went away from the old shop, where food and house-room were grudged her by her brother, who had a wife and family of his own, and a few years afterwards she was heard of as house-keeper to Dr. Porteous. The Rector had long had an account for broad-brimmed hats with her father, which account her brother vowed was still unpaid ; and, having met her one bleak winter's day starving in the streets, he had clothed and fed her. Henceforth she had followed his fortunes ; and when poverty came upon him as one that travelleth and want as an armed man, she had shared what he could get, giving him the better part ; she had scolded and comforted him by turns, and would, if need had been, have dared, to die for him. She wore a front of cork-screw curls, and a little

rouge which she had put on sideways and awry, too near her nose, having an indifferent mirror and a dim light to dress by. She was very thin, poor creature, and very queerly dressed in odds and ends of trumpery, bravely patched together. She had a gallant, perhaps defiant, appearance, not unlike a house of cards built high, or a paste and paper boat about to put to sea.

She was mighty polite to the Curate, for persons not habitually accustomed to good company are never quiet or easy in their manners. As soon as they see a stranger, some hidden mechanism of their being impels them into action as though they moved upon wheels and springs. They cannot help being demonstrative and oppressive. First the poor lady blushed at the recollection of having been seen by the Curate in her night-cap the last time he had paid a visit to his superior. Then her feminine instinct told her that Mr. Mowledy was not the sort of person who was accustomed to partake of Irish stew and whiskey punch at dinner. Then she resolved, in a truly female spirit of kindness and perverse enterprise, that she would overcome his dislike to such good things, and in her own

mind determined to make him a fuller and merrier man before the afternoon was much older. She saw that he was pale and sad and tired, and all the better feelings of the woman kindled at the sight of suffering she could sooth and charm away.

‘Bless my soul, Reverend Sir,’ exclaimed Dr. Porteous, rising, and making a circle with his arms, as he took off his double reading glasses to get a better view of his Curate, ‘bless my soul, it was only yesterday that I was thinking of you, my worthy and excellent coadjutor. *Ennius recte ; Amicus certus in re incertâ cernitur*. I think with Ennius, and thank you for your timely visit. How do you do, Reverend Sir ; how *do* you do ?’

The Doctor had lost none of his grand ways, though, if the truth must be told, he reddened a little as he remembered the small change he had taken from the Curate after their tavern dinner, and the recollection pricked him as though the point of a sharp needle had been thrust into the quick of one of his nails. Yet he would have done the same thing again, to-day, to-morrow, for loose habits grow upon those who have once put them on, and Dr. Porteous always wanted

money so badly that he had learned to think any means by which it could be quietly got were not only justifiable, but necessary.

Meantime, the Doctor's companion had bustled from the room, and presently returned with a very red face, as that of one who could say, 'Ha! ha! I am warm, I have seen the fire;' and she sat down on the extreme edge of her chair, apparently awaiting some foreseen and prepared event. Then came a sound as of stumbling up a staircase, and something bumped, trembled, and clattered, and jingled as though crockery and glass were commixed and contending against the rickety parlour door. The good lady, on hospitable thoughts intent, hastened to open it, when in steamed the departed Irish stew, again filling the air with its fragrance, and flanked by a foaming pint of porter, which savoury things hid and extinguished a small maid-of-all-work beneath them.

'You cannot refuse to dine with us, Mr. Mowledy?' said the lady, all a-blush and a-flutter with her innocent and friendly stratagem. 'The Rector is always saying how far it is from Wakefield, and told me to be sure and have

some refreshment ready for you next time you came.'

The maid-of-all-work, having extricated herself from her burthen and returned to the upper world, said, in a loud whisper, 'Please mum, Mister Philpotts wouldn't let me have the beer without the tuppence, mum, he wouldn't, till I toll dim as how you 'ad a strange gent kum mup from the counteree, mum.'

'That will do, Susan; go down stairs, and mind and have a tea-kettle of boiling water ready when I ring,' replied the housekeeper, hastily, trying to smother the maid-of-all-work's explanations, and some further whispering between them took place in the passage; but the Curate had heard enough to make him understand and forgive what had happened to the change of his five pound note at the tavern; and he felt a strange pitying sort of kindness for his superior, who was so worthless, so generous, so courteous.

It was surely a fine kind of politeness which induced Mr. Mowledy to accept the dinner offered him without further pressing, and having silently returned thanks for it to the Giver of

all good, he sat down and thanked the Rector's housekeeper.

‘*Deliciæ illepidæ atque inelegantes,*’ observed the Doctor, with cordial good humour; ‘but an Irish stew is among the least objectionable of our home-made dishes. It presents less resistance to the teeth than our national roast beef, which can be seldom enjoyed in perfection by a small family, and it is more savoury than our famous English mutton cooked by any other method. *Plus salis quam sumptûs* is sound reason in an empty purse.’

‘We have nothing else, but a pigeon pie, and an apple tart, and some custards, Mr. Mowledy, so that you see your dinner,’ said the housekeeper, who by this time had sent the small maid-of-all-work to the neighbouring pawnbroker’s with her shawl, and thence to the pastrycook’s for these delicacies.

‘*Ἀλλᾶ γὰρ ἐστὶ τῆς ἀληθείας ἔπη,*’ remarked the Doctor; ‘I was not aware there were so many good things. My dear—ehem! Mrs. Wilkins, I think I will myself taste that pigeon pie. It has an enticing aspect which, I confess, captivates me,’ and the Rector, nothing loth, sat down to a second dinner.

When it was over the housekeeper brought a bowl of punch, which she had made with practised art down stairs, and set it on the table, after which she disappeared. The Curate suffered his glass to be filled without protest, but drank nothing, and before Dr. Porteous could drink too much, the humble parish priest and man of God gave out his message.

Dr. Porteous heard him to the end, and then caressed his chin with a wise look and muttered 'Hum! Ha.' Having done this, he poked the fire, sat down, drank off a glass of punch, got up again, and walked about the room with his hands behind him, apparently immersed in reflections too deep for words. Suddenly he stopped short before the fire, put his hands under his coat tails, knitted his brows, and looked down upon the carpet. Being satisfied that he had thus composed a face and air suited to the circumstances of a Doctor of Divinity whose advice is required upon matters of import, a droll look came abruptly into his countenance, as who should say, 'I have done enough for appearances.'

'Well now, Reverend Sir,' began Dr. Porteous, swinging his double eye-glass in his

right hand, and thrusting the other into the yellowish shirt-frill, which still preserved some equality of outline between his chest and the regions immediately beneath it; 'if I were a bishop, you know, or a grave old fogey, I should be obliged to say, *actum est*, it is all up with the poor woman, and read you a homily about submitting to the decrees of Providence. But I won't do that. Perhaps we may see daylight presently, for I can generally find my way out of another man's scrape, though not out of my own. *Vivere est cogitare*. Let us think over it.'

'I am anxious,' said the Curate, 'that no time should be lost, for I much fear the effect of prison fare upon a form so frail and delicate as that of the person who is accused, wrongfully—I feel assured most wrongfully.'

'*Mora omnis odio est, sed facit sapientiam*. The more haste the worst speed,' answered the Doctor, who liked the sound of his own voice too well to conclude any affair hastily. 'Nevertheless, *omnis nimium longa properanti mora est*, and I should be the last person to deny that delay is sometimes disagreeable, especially when one expects a remittance.'

The Curate fancied that there was acuteness and experience under the theatrical demeanour and rhodomontade of his chief, so he only bowed his head and listened.

‘Humph,’ said the Doctor, ‘let us set our heads together, Reverend Sir, since you take an interest in this accused lady. I have some knowledge of the world, which is entirely at your service, and—take another glass of punch : *Stultum est in luctu capillum sibi evellere, quasi calvitio mœror levaretur*, a wet grief is better than a dry one.’

Mr. Mowledy related everything that had happened to him since he had left the police court, as far as it bore upon the point at issue, and told Dr. Porteous that under heaven his sole hope now was centred in his grand connection.

‘He can’t help us if he would, and would not help us if he could,’ said the Doctor, generously making Mr. Mowledy’s case his own, and identifying himself with it. ‘A Cabinet Minister never dare do anything.’

‘I have a slight knowledge,’ said Mr. Mowledy, ‘of the present Lord Chancellor. I was once present at a consultation he attended in my

brother's case. We seemed to take a fancy to each other, and had some conversation upon a moot point of ecclesiastical law after the business of the consultation was over. I have considered the propriety of addressing him. Perhaps he may remember me, and I am bound to take no rest till I have saved innocent blood.'

'The Lord Chancellor is the last person in the kingdom, perhaps, who could help you in a law case. He could get you an invitation to a ball at the French Ambassador's or to dine with the Lord Mayor, but he would as soon go into court without his robes, as interfere with a magistrate's decision upon private grounds, and in a private manner.'

'Suppose,' inquired Mr. Mowledy, anxiously, 'I were personally to request one of the Members for Dronington to ask a question to-night in the House of Commons, would that enable him to interfere publicly, or call the attention of Government to the subject, so that injustice could not be done in a corner?'

'Not for the world,' replied Dr. Porteous. 'If we want to carry your point, we must be silent as mice. A single word in the House of Commons would call up the law officers of the

Crown. It would be regarded as an attack on Government, and the poor woman would no longer have a chance of escape. Tradesmen like this Mr. Slopgood have always some very powerful friends, too; and if they were ever so little in the wrong it might pay them to frustrate any attempt at inquiry without scruple.'

'Then there remains nothing but the Right of Petition to the Crown,' sighed Mr. Mowledy.

'Fiddle-de-dee! Reverend Sir, pray excuse me,' said the Doctor, recollecting himself and hastening to apologise for an unintentional expression of disrespect to his guest. 'Petitions and all that kind of thing are merely sounding nonsense. They do no good. They mean nothing but disappointment. The sovereign has ceased to possess any sort of authority, and is merely a private person like the rest of us, only more averse to anything in the shape of publicity.'

'Would the Press help us? The Editor of the *Banner* was my college tutor,' urged Mr. Mowledy.

'Ah! Reverend Sir, and an excellent person he is, too,' said Dr. Porteous, whose eyes twinkled with a stray gleam of humour which

was extinguished almost as soon as it appeared. 'To be sure, I knew Littleton very well. He was a Demy of Magdalen. To be sure! But he could not help us, I am afraid, just now. No sort of publicity ever does any good where lawyers are concerned. It only teaches your opponents how to frame their case most awkwardly to meet yours. Ah! Reverend Sir, I see you are still very young,' and Dr. Porteous smiled benevolently down upon his Curate who felt somewhat abashed by his conspicuous want of worldly wisdom.

'Where, Sir, is power to be found?' asked Mr. Mowledy, sadly. 'Who can and will help the oppressed, and see that right and justice are administered without respect to persons?'

'Ah!' said the Doctor, good-humouredly, 'that is a long question with which we have fortunately nothing to do at present; but the first part of it is easily answered. Power is to be found on an office stool, and the present King of England is King Clerk—a very despotic and absolute monarch—invisible, supreme. It is really of no use, Reverend Sir, of no use at all going to peers or princes if you want anything done. Secretaries, Under-secretaries,

Assistant Under-secretaries, Senior Clerks, those are men who hold authority; they nearly all know and trust each other: they form a curious sort of secret society, extending over the civilised world. Its rules are unwritten, but they are thoroughly understood and thoroughly binding. Nobody will admit that we live under a reign of clerks; but every man of experience knows it, and acts upon it.'

'I have heard something of this in old times at debating clubs,' answered the Curate, 'and read something of it in satires and pamphlets when I may have thought my life's course would have taken a different direction to that which it has followed, but I could never bring my mind to believe that there was sober truth in a statement so humiliating to a great and loyal nation.'

Dr. Porteous smiled in a queer sly way he had sometimes, and continued—'I fear that all nations, in all time, have been more or less governed by clerks. We both know of Herod's man Blastus, the Chamberlain, and of the artful official people who worried Daniel, and of the trouble which some of them gave to Moses. They seem to have been numerous, too, at the

Court of the Pharaohs. Well, we must not go back too far into history, or we should lose ourselves. It is enough for our purpose just now to remember that the King of England sits in a back room in Downing Street, and what is better, I am acquainted with him, Reverend Sir. Moreover, I can give you a letter of introduction to him'—and the Doctor, who had always pen and ink at hand, with bill stamps and other objects of immediate necessity to his existence, wrote a few words on a sheet of note paper, recommending his Curate as a perfectly safe and harmless person, for whom he himself would answer, and who might be frankly dealt with in affairs of State. His letter was written in that short, familiar style which belongs to the inner mysteries of London life, and which means so much while it says so little. Some people find it as impossible to keep themselves steady on a sheet of paper as on horseback, but the Doctor's grasp of his correspondent was always firm and artistic. He did not write with the fear of the Court of Chancery before his eyes, and he did not write compromising letters. He wrote letters which could only be understood by the

person to whom they were addressed, and which could not be produced if he turned sour or quarrelsome; letters which his correspondents generally received with a smile and burned promptly. For instance, this is what he wrote to the present King of England:—

‘DEAR CHIEF,—

‘THE Bearer is a rattling good fellow, and worthy to be a B. himself. No buzz or roar in him. Put him up to a good business. Enclosed recipe for Wynand’s punch. Omit tea. Ever
A Creeping Beetle,

‘P.’

This admirable epistle was composed in the language of the famous Beetle Club, a close and pleasant society, to which Dr. Porteous and other choice spirits of the age belonged, by birth, or selection from their entrance into London life. They dined together every Tuesday in the season at a small hotel in Spring Gardens, kept by the retired cook of a Lord Hanaper: they were sworn friends and confederates, bound together by a vow not the less faithfully observed because it was as comic and bombastical as the ‘Highgate oath,’ and they had adopted for a

motto, 'We creep by Night.' The Rector's letter was addressed to the President of the Committee—

JOHN BODGER, Esq.,

&c. &c. &c.,

Mundane Office.

A gentleman without rank or title, with nothing whatever to call attention to him, a gentleman whose very name was not known beyond his department, but who was certainly, all things considered, one of the richest and most influential personages in Europe, as his father and grandfather had been before him. In the corner of this letter was scrawled one of those quiet insects which walk in darkness, and from which the Beetle Club derived its name and motto. It was the sign under which the members of the club communicated with each other, so that their letters might be at once recognised and distinguished from those of other people who had no claim to attention. Mr. Mowledy found it as potent as the 'Open Sesame' of the old story.

CHAPTER XVII.

A PERMANENT PERSON.

JOHNNY BODGER, a senior clerk of the Mundane Office, was one of the most popular and agreeable men in London. He was a thoroughly respectable and avowable person, and London society knew all about him. His family, as everybody was aware, had been in the Mundane Office for more than a hundred years. Their names appeared here and there in the memoirs of deceased statesmen, and in the pleasant books which diners out and preservers of anecdote left behind them to be published after their death, and the name of Bodger was invariably found in good company. It took no recorded part in history; it was merely there—a name which met one chapter after chapter, and which people read without attention, and brushed away from their memory without thinking of it. No Bodger ever did

or said anything, though whenever anything of note was said or done, a Bodger appeared dimly in the background, helping or echoing what was done or said by the strongest or Government side. The Bodger family first began to be heard of in the reign of James I. Their influence can be traced all through the times of the Stuarts, and ever since. King Jamie delighted in them, and kept them about him by the score and by the hundred.

It was a Bodger who is supposed to have suggested the creation of Baronets, to have known of the Overbury murder before it happened, and to have had a hand in Raleigh's death-warrant. Lord Bacon found many Bodgers busy in Courts of Law, and personally availed himself of their services, 'selling Justice, not Injustice' through them, as he said; therefore they were discontented, and ruined him. They thrived mightily under Charles I. A Bodger was employed by the Duke of Buckingham in the proceedings against Sir John Elliot, and another carried the purchase-money of his Majesty to the Scotch Commissioners, he having changed sides after the death of Villiers,

Stratford and Laud, and the King's defeat at Naseby—not before.

This Republican Bodger worked the case of his kinsfolk so cleverly through Richard Cromwell, that they contrived to obtain compensation, even from the grim protector, for the abolition of offices they held under the Star Chamber. Mr. Carlyle tells us, however, that Cromwell rebuked a permanent official Bodger who would not do as he was told, and the family were under a cloud all through the Commonwealth, their apostacy notwithstanding, but shone out again at the Restoration. Samuel Pepys records, in the most delightful diary ever written, that he had many Bodgers for colleagues, and that they swarmed about all the public offices in his time. Samuel himself was closely allied to them. They had an undetected part in the sale of Dunkirk, and in the disgrace of Clarendon, which followed close upon it. They were suspected by Evelyn and other shrewd observers of being known to Titus Oates, and to the murderers of Sir Edmonbury Godfrey, and to have had a hand in the execution of William Lord Russell and Algernon Sydney ; but none of those grave charges were

ever brought home to them, nor were their names publicly mentioned either in State Papers or in the fierce satires of a time when the Press was legally deprived of freedom. A few philosophers watched them with a quiet smile, using them discreetly and without intermediate agents when they wanted anything, civilly avoiding them if they did not. But neither the Court party, nor the popular party, though they controlled both by turns, knew of their existence. They held steadily by James II., and would have saved his Crown if he had not run away; but William III. did not like them, and swept them out of the public offices like rubbish. They came into place again in great numbers under Queen Anne and the four Georges, suffering merely temporary harm and loss from Newton, Locke, and Mr. Pitt, which was more than made up to them by the Duke of Newcastle, Lord Liverpool, Lord Castlereagh, Mr. Perceval, and Lord Ward. During the reign of William IV., they actually filled the principal posts in the kingdom, having deprived the titular holders of all authority. They proved too strong both for Sir Robert Peel and Lord Palmerston. Lord Aberdeen submitted to them without a struggle.

Earl Russell declared that they were the most valuable persons in the country. They knocked down such men as Lord Dundonald and Mr. Canning like nine-pins, and at the period to which this tale refers it had become generally understood, not only that they were, but that they ought to be, the supreme rulers of the country. All the prerogatives of the Crown had been long since transferred to them, and now their power was publicly and openly acknowledged, sanctioned by the law in accordance with innumerable judgments, confirmed by Parliament after long debates. Indeed, six clerks in Chancery, all Bodgers, standing back to back, had resisted the whole united strength of the three kingdoms for 541 years.

The present Bodger had been born into the Mundane Office. He had succeeded his father, who had succeeded his grandfather, and all the springs and keys of office were in Bodger's hands. The case stood pretty much in this way : Johnny Bodger was senior clerk and private agent *ex officio* for receiving the salaries of all persons employed by the Mundane Department, except those who resided in London. Johnny Bodger had personally to do only with the business and

affairs between Great Britain and eight other countries. Nothing more. Now the practical working of the Mundane Office was in their hands; the Parliamentary Secretaries of State, Lord Lobby, a dinner-going young peer, and Mr. Verbose, a member of the House of Commons, with spring-heeled boots, in constant use, having other things to do. It must not be supposed that the agency of Johnny Bodger was a vulgar or insignificant thing. The amount voted annually by Parliament for the Mundane Office was about 600,000*l.*, and very nearly the whole of it passed through the hands of Johnny Bodger, leaving a gross commission of about five per cent. behind it, so that this gentleman, whose salary appeared but as a modest 900*l.* a year in the public accounts, really enjoyed an income superior to that of the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Lord Chancellor put together. Moreover, he made an admirable use of it, and was thereby enabled to render many important services to persons of rank and consideration. He was a jolly, jovial fellow, not a bit proud of his money, hospitable, open-handed, having a snug town house, and a snug country house,

with treasures of art and valuable curiosities, which had been collecting during several generations ; a good stable, a good cook, and troops of friends. His relatives and adherents were to be found everywhere : in the Cabinet, where Lord Lobby had a place, in the Church, on the Bench, in the Bar, in the Army. We have seen in what connection he stood to Dr. Porteous.

CHAPTER XVIII.

ON HER MAJESTY'S SERVICE.

'It is no use for you to go to the Mundane Office to-day, nor much before three o'clock to-morrow,' were the parting words of Dr. Porteous to his Curate; 'because the clerks are all swells, and take it easily. Very proper too: most of them don't get enough pay to buy their gloves and eau-de-Cologne. However, you will find them first-rate fellows, and my letter will secure you a reception without starch in it.'

It was then five, and Mr. Mowledy ought to have returned to his hotel, but he would take no rest, and so went straight to the Mundane Office, hoping that perchance the Clerk-King might still be there, nor was he disappointed. Though the office hours were past, many of the clerks still tarried to chat as they drank sherry and bitters; and when Mr. Mow-

ledy sent up the Rector's letter of recommendation, addressed to John Bodger, Esq., he was immediately admitted into the presence of that royal personage. Even the hall porters, thanks to his letter, treated the Curate with an undemonstrative sort of freemasonry which impressed him at once with the idea that they considered him from a favourable point of view, and, so to say, as one of themselves. There is something in the air of our public offices which makes itself felt immediately upon every one who enters there; it is refreshing and wholesome to one, noxious or deadly to another. Mr. Mowledy was sensible of an oppression and uneasiness about the chest and head, as though he were under the influence of some potent drug or vapour, and he could not breathe freely. An idea possessed him that if he were to slip up, or tumble down, or cough, the consequences might be serious. He had an unpleasant consciousness that unseen eyes were watching him, and that sharp ears, for ever on the cock, were invisibly hearkening behind closed doors, or in closets, or on the landings of staircases. The gloomy passages, silent and mysterious, leading no whither, the dark figures

of unknown persons gliding noiselessly about, the bare, bald, ugly look of this dowdy old building, which was a name and terror throughout the world, inspired Mr. Mowledy with a vague sense of apprehension and discomfort. Every hair of his body seemed endowed with a separate life. His clothes sat stiffly on him, he had a crick in the neck, and for the first time in his life, perhaps, looked not altogether without humiliation upon his shabby country-made clothes. Was it possible that the good man had entered into the abode of Vanity and Vexation of Spirit, and that he suffered merely from the deleterious atmosphere round about him.

‘Walk this way, sir, if you please,’ said a messenger, putting down the ministerial evening paper, and leisurely leading the way up a faded and dirty staircase, till he stopped at a faded and dirty door.

‘That is Mr. Bodger’s room, sir,’ observed the leisurely messenger in a leisurely tone, and then he went leisurely back to his evening paper, and the patient collection of such vails as fell in his way from an impatient public, which ought to have been used to the leisurely customs of the Mundane Office, but was not.

Mr. Mowledy knocked at the shabby door of Mr. Bodger's room, and a voice answered cheerfully :

‘ Root-i-toot-i-ooti-tootit ! Come in ! ’ It was like unto the voice which Mr. Mowledy had lately heard as he passed through a quiet street where a Punch and Judy show was performing. Somewhat abashed, Mr. Mowledy knocked again.

‘ Bow, wow, wow ! Wow-wow-wow-wow-wow-wow-wow-wow ! ’ replied the same voice in passionate accents.

After a pause, Mr. Mowledy knocked again.

‘ Kookerikoo ! ’ crowed the voice, excitedly, and something now approached the door by leaps and bounds like the jumping of a kangaroo, and suddenly flinging it open, bounded back again with discordant screams.

The room thus revealed to view was a large square apartment, lofty and well lighted, but sordidly furnished. In it were four common deal tables, solidly made, and covered over with blue baize or cloth. In the centre of each table was a folio sheet of virgin blotting-paper, some foolscap, and a packet of excellent goosequill pens, unstained, reposed near a large convenient

inkstand beside them. Behind each table was a strong arm-chair. A comfortable fire burned in an ample grate, and four or five well-dressed gentlemen stood at ease before it, or lounged near the old-fashioned windows which looked into St. James's Park.

'Come in,' said a merry young gentleman, laughing, for Mr. Mowledy still hesitated to intrude upon what appeared to be a convivial meeting. 'Come in: Bodger is only rehearsing his celebrated imitation of the menagerie for Lady Lobby's charade to-morrow. Do the dog-trick again, Johnny,' continued the young gentleman, shewing an infinite zest in the entertainment, and addressing Mr. Bodger, for it was the monarch himself who thus beguiled the tedium of State affairs.

'All right,' replied Mr. Bodger, 'you're old Porty's friend, aren't you, Mr. What's-your-name. You're not in a hurry, are you? If you are it is not of the slightest consequence, you know. Porty's got a nephew downstairs whom we call the waiter, on account of the resigned disposition with which he is expecting promotion. Root-ti-toooooit! sit down.'

This friendly welcome being given, Mr.

Bodger went down upon all fours, pulled his hair over his eyes, and gathered all his coat about his shoulders, till he bore an astonishing resemblance to a poodle dog, and he barked again and again, to the admiration of his colleagues. He went through the form of sitting on what appeared to be his hind legs, and begged with infinite grace and spirit. He jumped through a child's hoop without touching it. He chased his own tail, which was a ruler wrapped in a pocket handkerchief, and he wagged it, going through a dozen engaging tricks with a fidelity which could only have been acquired by long and loving study of the habits of many poodle dogs, added to an original genius and aptitude of the highest kind.

Many fine gentlemen came in and went out during this performance. Letters and telegrams, and invitations to balls and dinners were brought up, and hot luncheons on trays, and bottles of sherry and shining tankards of ale. Some of the fine gentlemen smoked cigarettes, some read the newspapers, some wrote double acrostics for a fashionable paper which then amused the town; and Johnny Bodger, having rehearsed his tricks and sung a comic song in the Beetle

dialect, went up to Mr. Mowledy, drank a glass of sherry and bitters, and asked him what he wanted; or to be more accurate, he said—

‘Here we are again. What’s the row?’

Mr. Mowledy, who looked with the benevolent indulgence of a wise man on the harmless follies which had been going on around him, told his story very simply, divesting it of all pathos, and importing no sentiment into it.

‘Hullo,’ cried Johnny Bodger when he had heard him to the end; ‘here’s a lark, Krør! Your brother has been putting his foot into it again: and here’s an orthodox clergyman of the Church of England come to stick up against him for oppressed innocence.’

The gentleman thus addressed, who was evidently high up in the Mundane department, yawned and answered, ‘Hit him again, Johnny, he’s got no friends.’

‘I say, Wyldwyl, telegraph to Krør!’s brother, will you, and ask what he’s done with Mrs. Brown. Her Majesty’s Government are anxious about her. Go it.’

‘Bother Mrs. Brown. She’ll keep, won’t she. I’m off to Beaumanoir, and want to catch the train,’ replied Mr. Wyldwyl.

‘Fred!’ said Johnny Bodger, lighting a cigarette and addressing Mr. Wyldwyl. ‘Tell Lady Overlaw, with my love, that Worth has promised to send her costume by our messenger to-night, and one of our bagmen shall take it down to her on his way to Osborne; it won’t be far out of the road. Placard-Cardwell, telegraph to Krorl, please, from me, and say we want to know something about Margaret Brown.’

‘All right!’ answered Lord Alfred Placard-Cardwell, son of the new Marquis of Newcomen. ‘But why don’t you send Lobster to Skinpole Street, he’ll learn more from his brother that way than through the wire.’

Mr. Krorl, who was employed in the Mundane Office, was nicknamed Lobster on account of the colour of his hair, and generally rubicund appearance.

‘You’re too fond of street errands, Handbill,’ replied Mr. Krorl. Handbill being the nickname of Lord Alfred Placard-Cardwell.

Johnny Bodger roared like a lion. ‘I’ll tell you fellows what,’ said he, ‘if you can’t agree about your labours I’ll get rid of some of you, and have in a new lot. Go and work the wires,

Handbill, look sharp,' and thus entreated Lord Alfred Placard-Cardwell went. A minute afterwards he thrust his head into the room again and observed, 'Johnny, I shan't come back again, old man, shall I? Petty-Pells and his sisters are with me.'

'No; speak up through the tube. But look here, Handbill; don't forget the letters to those beggars who've been complaining—"Anxious consideration, regrets, &c., and obedient servant"—the old thing, you know.'

'Yes, yes, I'll stew them in the same old sauce, Johnny,' sobbed Lord Alfred, tragically, and pretending to be overcome by deep emotion, he stalked with highly lifted footsteps along the passage and slid down the staircase upon one of the banisters to the floor, where his own room was situated and intermittent lunch was going on all day.

'What's old Dick Porteous doing now? He's got some land down your way, hasn't he?' asked Johnny Bodger of the Curate. 'His eldest son's here, you know, but he and his guvnor don't speak. The old boy isn't dootiful.'

Mr. Mowledy explained that he never saw Sir Richard Porteous.

'Sharpe has got him tight in hand still, I suppose?' said Johnny Bodger, who liked to pick up stray bits of information, and was very fond of trustworthy intelligence about living persons who had been, were, or might be in society. 'I always heard,' he continued, 'that the living of Wakefield was the best thing Dick Porteous and his brother have left; but I suppose you get none of the fat, do you?'

In this way the conversation proceeded for half an hour or so, till a muffled and rumbling sound came through the india-rubber speaking tube near Mr. Bodger's table.

'That's Handbill answering about your young woman,' said Johnny Bodger, putting his ear to the orifice of the tube, and a minute afterwards he told the Curate, 'There's no harm done. The case was dismissed, and the woman has gone home with her husband. There'll probably be a report in the papers, but you mustn't mind that. A thin skin is of no use.'

'Lord Straightwayes, Colonel Strong, and Mr. Backhouse are down stairs, sir,' said an office messenger, coming discreetly into the room.

‘Oh, Dawson,’ replied Johnny Bodger, ‘tell Lord Straightwayes My Lord is now at a Cabinet Council, and has been summoned to Osborne to-night. You can say to Colonel Strong that I have no orders from My Lord to see him; I can do nothing without Lord Lobby’s orders; and ask Mr. Backhouse to walk up.’

‘Lord Lobby must be very busy,’ said the Curate, as he made his acknowledgments for Mr. Bodger’s good-natured offers of service.

‘No he isn’t,’ answered Johnny, breezily. ‘He has been playing a game at chess these three days with Handbill, who is his private secretary, you know. He never interferes with us; but we always tell the public we have no power, or we should be bothered all day long, and obliged to do things we don’t choose to do. Lord Straightwayes wants to have an inquiry into his brother’s case, and his brother has affronted Fred Wyldwyl, so that won’t do, because if he got out of his scrape, Fred would get in. Colonel Strong comes about an old claim of his against the office, but he didn’t bow to me one day in the street, so I mean to crucify

him. We take care of our friends, and hit out against our enemies pretty hard, I can tell you. Good-bye ; won't you have another glass of sherry or a pull at the beer ? No ! Well, ta-ta, and give our love to old Porty.'

CHAPTER XIX.

'JOHNNY BODGER.'

FEW things are sadder or more inexplicable in human life than the waste of labour and energy which is seen everywhere in the world. For a whole day Mr. Mowledy had been trying with heart and soul to do that which had already been done without his interference. With much perseverance, and many wrestlings, he had at last tracked the vain capricious thing called earthly power to its source, and had found it, as Dr. Porteous told him he would do, entrenched in the windings and pitfalls of office, a thing at once terrible and ludicrous, engaged in feeding fat small grudges, at the cost of everything great or good, and imitating the antics of a poodle dog. The business of the world, as far as he could see, was carried on meanwhile by a few set phrases of refusal to do it, and some stereotyped forms which belonged to departmental

tradition and signified nothing. He had seen them brought in by sheaves and laid on Mr. Bodger's table for signature whensoever it might please him to stop barking and crowing—for a time. Anything else that was done was done by private favour, and in such a manner that it had better have been left undone. It was managed without knowledge, or inquiry, or care, because somebody was formidable enough or useful enough to insist on being heard. This was the power that ruled the land, and it had not been ill-natured to him; he had nothing to complain of, because he was an obscure clergyman who lived far away from the official world, and no one had any reason to vex or thwart or injure him, for neither gain could be got nor envy satisfied by doing so. Therefore he had found Power friendly, well disposed, and able to serve him without coming into collision with any hostile influence. A tipsy, disreputable old fellow had presented him to Power, and done more for him in a few lines of rigmarole than a statesman whose name represented authority throughout the three kingdoms had been able to do.

Musing over these things, and silently

thanking the divine Providence which had delivered his parishioner by means of its own, at a time when she might well have exclaimed, in the troubled words of the psalmist, 'I looked upon my right hand and beheld that there was no man that would know me; refuge failed me, no man cared for my soul;' and adding for his own part, 'Return unto thy rest, Oh my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee,' Mr. Mowledy bent his steps towards the Strand, on his way to the hotel, or rather tavern, where he knew that Tom Brown and Harry Jinks had taken lodgings so as to be nearer Madge in case she should be committed for trial.

It was dark now, and there was that lull in the streets of London which lasts from dusk till nearly ten o'clock. The parks had given up their equipages and fine company; the latest carriage had rolled away from the latest garden party; business and pleasure, flirtation and politics, seemed to be hushed in repose during the solemn hour of dinner, while all Belgravia and the West End were eating and drinking precisely the same things that they had eaten and drank yesterday, and would eat and drink to-morrow, in accordance with the unvarying

laws and customs of this great though somewhat uninventive country.

But though all the wheels and springs which set London in motion seemed to have stopped by enchantment, and would make little noise till the carriages came rushing back from the servants' clubs where they were waiting, while five hundred guinea horses coughed and shivered in draughty bye streets, and would again rattle away to opera, and 'at home' with occupants who made a very toil of amusement; still all the wheels and springs of the great city were never more silently active.

The minister still sat at his desk preparing an answer to the Non-ending question; the merchant was still busy with his figures in many a dark office of the city. Along the dusky streets and deserted squares, while the lamps were lighting, swiftly flitted shadowy forms of veiled women, and cabs scurried to and fro on varied errands. It was the hour of stolen interviews; and love which was unutterable then looked its awful secret, momentous to unborn generations; levity wore her lightest smile, and crime walked whispering with furtive glances and clutched fingers upon its anguished way.

Meantime Mr. Mowledy, passing the thronged theatres and their waiting crowds, which had no temptation for his eyes or ears, bethought him that the way to Newgate would be long on foot, and so hailed a yellow omnibus tastefully decorated with scarlet and blue advertisements. It stopped, and the Curate took his seat next a jovial driver who reminded him in British fashion that it was dry weather, favourable to beer drinking, then clucked to his team and set them going.

Up the Strand, past those quiet quaint old churches, which Mr. Mowledy views with an eye of love, St. Mary's, St. Clement's, all closed and dark ; through Temple Bar and along Fleet Street, with its stolid rows of banks, temples to Mammon, and so borne on by the patient trot of honest horses to Newgate.

Throngs of dull workmen are loitering about here, having a sickly passion for the prison and all belonging to it ; and nursing their terrors, as the rich and idle feed imagination on the wonders of a winter's tale. The British workman is a sullen sort of lout, fond of black beer and horrors ; and not at all like his neighbour the Frenchman, who is off to a dance with a

frisky glass of seltzer water and currant syrup as soon as he is out of his shop or factory. A Parisian artisan is not driven to kick his heels against posts at street corners, or to fuddle himself at public-houses, for lack of amusement. Even if he cannot caper or pay for five sous' worth of frisky waters, his boulevards are planted with trees, and at convenient intervals are placed forms upon which he can seat himself with his family or friends. He has gardens well lit and well guarded always open to him for nothing. London might be made the finest capital in the world if its squares were illuminated and thrown open. But there are full a hundred squares there which are never entered by any living soul. Why not throw them open? Why hedge them in fiercely and unchristianly with spiked railings? Our squares might be turned into gardens, our streets might have trees and benches, giving beauty and shadow and repose even to poverty; and London might become a real poor man's home as well as Paris—if it were not for a few vested interests, and an incredible quantity of stupidity. English workmen are forced into drink and dissipation because they have no other way of spending

their time than over a quart pot, or leaning against a post. Drunkenness is not the poor man's vice, it is his misfortune. So very often is sullenness. It is vice in the rich who thrust the poor man into the beer-shop to drive spleen away, then fine him forty shillings when he comes out, and call him a low vagabond.

Mr. Mowledy alighted from his omnibus and walked past Newgate to St. Sepulchre's Church, then passing through the private door of a tavern saw young Brown with Harry Jinks in the bar, both already too familiar with the worst side of London life and its black beer. The elder man looked flushed and angry; he had been hearing much talk of judges and justice which had unsettled his simple reverence for the institutions of his country. He had not been shaved that day nor the day before, having been ashamed to go into the fine hair-dresser's shop upon Ludgate Hill to which he had been sent for the purpose in answer to inquiry; and he had drank more black beer than was quite good for him: the honest fellow was sad and out of heart. He had wanted cheering as much as a duke who has been baulked in his jump at a blue riband, and had refreshed himself with the only drink at

hand, a mixture of liquorice water, tobacco juice, *coccus indicus*, and vitriol, '3d. per pot.'

Young Brown had also made his first acquaintance with 'Rum Shrub,' supplied to him by a florid barmaid, who had promptly set her cap at the handsome boy, and had served him from her own bottle with the best liquor she knew of. He was dressed in the dashing uniform of the First Lancers, a double-breasted blue tunic with scarlet facings and breast flaps, a broad belt, red and yellow, scarlet forage cap with yellow lace, clinking spurs, bright as silver, well-fitting trousers, riding whip, and white gloves. He looked dainty food for powder, and was a smart soldier every inch of him from head to heel. Hearing of his mother's trouble through a letter from Mr. Mowledy, he had obtained leave from his Colonel, and had come up to see what was the matter.

The sign of the Old Bailey tavern into which the Curate had entered, was the 'Goose and Gridiron,' an ancient sign which is preserved in many places about here, and which may or may not have some demure reference to a person who goes to law, and the method by which he

will probably be treated for so doing. It was kept by a retired prize-fighter, one Bob Nobbles, who had developed into a dissenter in religion and was extremely regular in his attendance at the chapel of Little Bethel at Lambeth, of which place of worship he was a shining light, being called an elder. 'Bob would not have called himself an elder if he could have helped it, but he could not help it, having been taken into custody, after he won the two hundred guinea fight with the 'Norfolk Dumpling,' and married against his will by a dried-up widow in a black front, who was relict of a departed landlord of the 'Goose and Gridiron.' After this remarkable incident in his biography, Bob Nobbles parted his hair in the middle and oiled it. He also wore turn-down collars of a meek and subdued pattern. He was not unlike an eel out of water, but rather stout.

His tavern was a great resort for young noblemen and other lively 'bloods' of the Mohawk sort on the Sunday evenings preceding executions. It was exactly opposite the low door surmounted by fetters whence convicts came out to be hanged, and the lamp-post over which the scaffold was erected. The landlord,

despite his recent conversion to the profession of an elder, was a jolly soul with a broken nose and hard knuckles, much afraid of the ex-widow. He had made his way to a comfortable competency by breaking the noses of other people, and now he rested upon his laurels with a shining face and sidelong looks, ever on the watch that his wife should not come upon him unforeseen, at some moment when his conduct might be unbecoming an elder.

He knew all about executions, and talked learnedly and freely upon the subject, if he could be caught alone on washing days; otherwise he groaned and turned up his eyes when they were mentioned. In his private tool box under the bar were portraits of famous murderers, and he had on view in an outhouse under ground a plaster cast of the late Mr. Burke—*not* the orator. His wife, who had a careful eye to the main chance, and understood the needs of trade, could not and indeed did not object to the sale of 'last dying confessions,' which were disposed of in his bar at a penny apiece, and even Mrs. Nobbles has been known to receive a bit of rope's end, given to her as a token of esteem by her late husband's old friend the hangman, with

much favour, for the thing was saleable; and Lord Mohawk had often bought them to play sportive jests on his mother and sisters; so had a few of his Lordship's amusing friends.

And just as sportsmen are apt to talk of Diomed's year and Teddington's year, so did Bob Nobbles speak of Courvoisier's year, Burdoch's year, and Pegsworth's year, reckoning time by the strangulations of which he had been a contented spectator. He made a fine sum of money whenever one of his fellow beings was swung into space; and highly approved of capital penalties in consequence. His 'golden age' was when criminals were executed regularly every Monday morning to the tune of St. Sepulchre's bells tolling hard by. And since these things had ceased he thought that England was degenerating. Yet, as man is an inconsistent animal, Nobbles once had a bull dog whom he loved and whom he regretted when that morose beast departed this life.

Mr. Mowledy found young Brown hot and excited, Harry Jinks fuddled and bewildered. Mr. Jinks remarked that there was a row up stairs, and seemed to have forgotten his customary respect in addressing the Curate.

But young Brown, taking his old tutor aside in an eager way, told him that his father and mother had been having bitter words, and that for the first time in his life his father had spoken harshly to him, William, and ordered him out of the room. The boy added with fevered lips that he did not know what to do.

Mr. Mowledy went slowly up the creaking stairs which led to a private room where Lord Mohawk drank his punch on hanging days. It was on the first floor, and had a bay window which commanded a good view of the drop, and could be let for five-and-twenty guineas upon interesting occasions; for it was the chief grand tier box of the whole row. The looking-glass over the mantelpiece was scrawled over, with names scratched by diamond rings, and simple Mr. Mowledy noticed with amazement among them titles of which he had read with awe in the page of English history.

CHAPTER XX.

HUSBAND AND WIFE.

MRS. BROWN was sitting down with her head buried in her hands and sobbing. Her husband was straddling wildly about the room, gesticulating and roaring hoarsely. The fact is that now his wife is well out of the clutches of the law, Tom feels inquisitive about the ten pound note, and wants to know how it came into her possession. He has been sulky and preoccupied ever since they left the police court, and has been asking Madge surlily to give him an account of it. Now the smouldering fire in him bursts forth with a flame and a mighty roar which has something fierce and terrible in it.

‘I tell ’ee, wench, I wants to know about the blunt, or I wull cleave the head of thee, an swing for’t.’ He, too, was impressed by what he had heard in that Newgate neighbourhood, and his thoughts were full of hanging and murder.

It was Mr. Sharpe who had first aroused his suspicion. The Yorkshire attorney did not think it worth while to be reticent, nor to spare Tom Brown's feelings. He did not suppose that such a one could have feelings, much less delicacy on connubial matters ; and therefore he had congratulated Madge with a wink on her release, and, wishing to pay her a compliment and gain information at the same time, had observed that she still preserved her good looks, and asked her when she had last seen the Duke of Courthope who had given her the note.

Then Tom Brown remembered the ill-omened stranger who had stayed a night at the inn, and horrible recollections set fire to his thick brain. He saw, or thought that he saw, a strong likeness between the young man he had heard Mr. Sharpe address as ' my Lord ' at the police court, and his seven-months' son, William.

Mrs. Brown remained dogged, after the wont of women, under his threats and anger. She rocked herself wearily in her chair, and looked with a fixed and strong gaze at the wall, crying inwardly over the ruins of her heart, but she spoke no word ; and when her husband heaped hard words upon her there was contempt and

defiance in her outward aspect, while all was so forlorn and miserable within her. Murder often happens thus, and might have well chanced now had the Curate not come in between the man in his wrath and the woman in her seeming scorn of it. She would not have shrunk from death. But a little longer, and she would have taunted him till he slew her.

He paced about with clumsy strides and lashed himself to frenzy, blurting out foul words and mad oaths. He was the worshipful slave of his wife so long as he believed in her, but the anger of these rough peasants is fearful when roused. He calls things by their names, and makes his wife flush with burning shame and indignation till her passion well-nigh surges over her grief. Once she starts up to try and reassert her old mastery, but his glance does not quail before her, and she sinks down overwhelmed—overladen.

‘I wull brain thee. I wull brain thee,’ he growls. ‘Art no better than a light o’ love? I wunnot let thee live na longer. Such things as thee dunnot ought fur to live.’

A word was coming up hotly to her lips now. In another minute she would have spoken

it, and he would have struck her. One blow from those strong hands would have left no need for another, and he would have silenced her for ever. Another minute and her face would have been upturned to him in death, with that proud look of scorn and hate which was passing into it with the suddenness of a white squall.

Then came Heaven's messenger upon the sorry scene, and Mr. Mowledy entering the room seemed to soothe their trouble, and his voice was like oil poured upon angry waters. In mercy to the poor woman he tried to take her part; but he too had once loved her, perhaps loved her still, and he felt a horrible pang at the thought of that secret which he feared to guess, and would not know though so near to it. He interposed very gently, standing between the man and the woman, till wrath had subsided in the one, resistance and provocation in the other.

'Let us pray,' said he; and kneeling down he uttered a brief extempore thanksgiving for their deliverance from a common danger, identifying himself with their sorrow, and taking his part in it as though he were one of them, and

they were all of the same family having the Almighty for their father.

Tom Brown so respected this poor Curate who had nothing but prayers to give, and gave them thus, that his wrath melted away in maudlin tears. He whimpered and whined like a sick child; begged Madge's pardon, and with much snivelling implored her humbly to clear up his doubts.

'Doe ha' pitty on a pore chap, Madge,' he blubbered. 'We ha bin tugayther winter time an harvest sa long. Oi cannut bear fur t' part. Oi nare shud be a mon na moor.'

Then Madge, who had been so haughty while he raved, began to feel a dreary, wondering compassion for him, and cast about in her mind how she should answer his entreaties. She thought of her children at Wakefield, and of William; and reflected that the happiness of all these innocent beings, and of her honest husband, must be for ever wrecked unless she crushed the suspicion which weighed upon her, once for all. So in very desperation she forced herself to tell a falsehood that would save her—save her, perhaps she did not care for that—but save her

children, and keep her from seeming vile in their eyes. She said that the bank-note was given to John Giles by the stranger to pay for his night's lodging; and that John Giles had given it to her on her marriage, but that she had treasured it secretly to spend by-and-by on her children.

'Hit oot at me, woif. Hit oot, oi saye,' roars honest Tom. 'Oi be nowt but a fule and a brute, Madge. Hit oot an a dun wi it. Oi did owt fur tubbee larrupped, that I du,' and Tom Brown, who is only too anxious to believe; and even Mr. Mowledy, who yearns to have Madge's character cleared, is fully satisfied with the explanation. It was a merciful falsehood; but weak things when they are hunted down do not become stronger because they are frightened and exhausted. Had Mr. Mowledy known that what she said was untrue would he have absolved her? This priest's mind was very pure, very strict and stern to his own backsliding; but it was very pitiful. Possibly he would have prayed that such a sin might not be visited upon so frail a creature too heavily, and his prayer might have been answered. If the erring

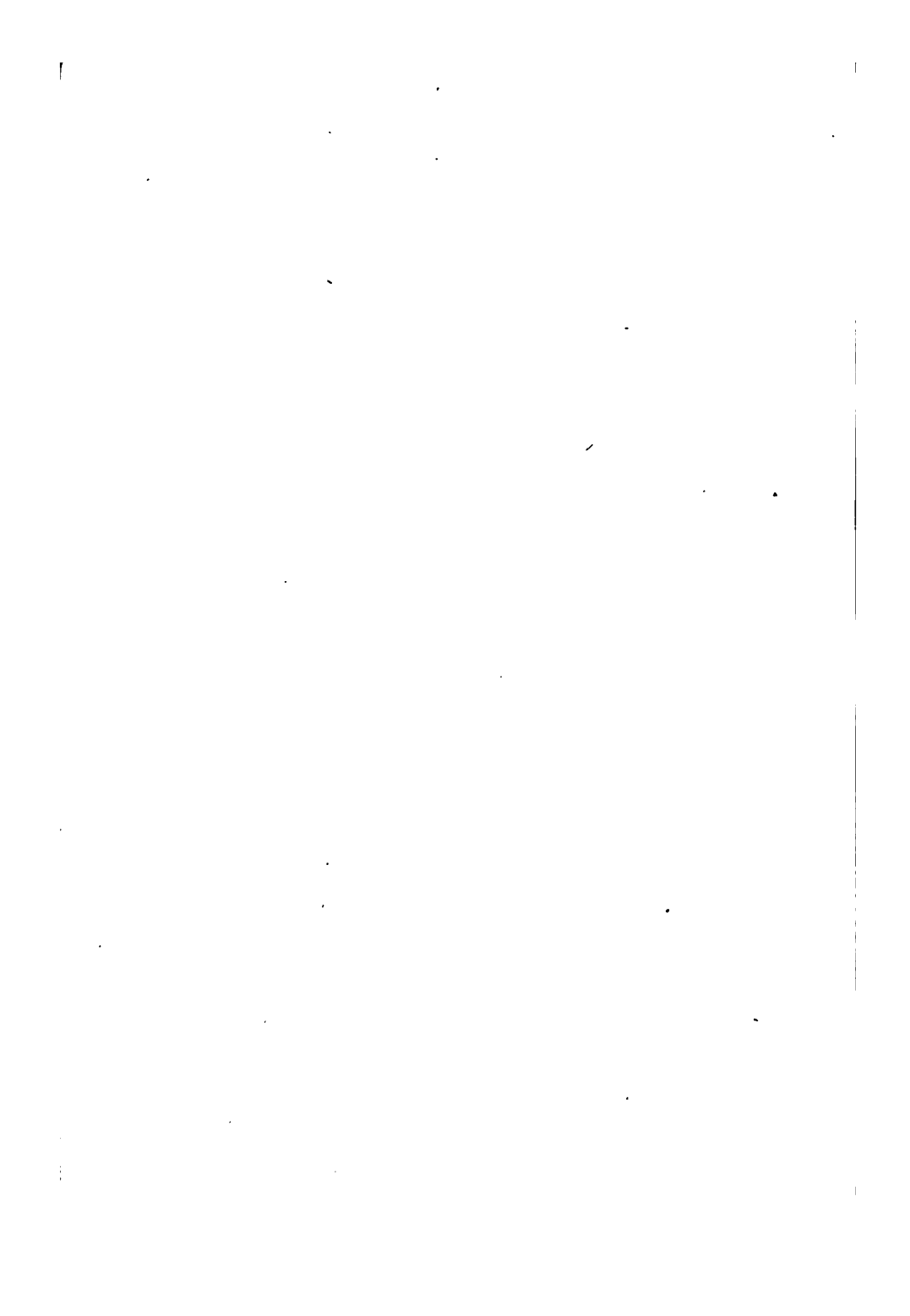
woman alone besought forgiveness, when she communed with her own heart in her chamber and was still, her solitary prayer may have been answered too. They were all reconciled. Tom repented of his rudeness and was forgiven. William Brown was called up, and his father was so proud of him in his smart uniform that he marvelled how he could ever have had a doubt that the lad was indeed his own most astonishing son. The boy sat down next his mother, who cooed over him and held his hands in hers, and smiled feebly with closed eyes as he talked, as though she wished to shut out the scene around her, and to drift away softly into the happy land of waking dreams.

The evening ended with a general tea in the sitting-room, where there was a print of Hogarth's hangman on the wall. The excellent landlord brought up his album of dying confessions to 'amuse' his guests till bed-time, and told an anecdote of the last 'cove as was 'ung' in such wise as to make Mr. Mowledy's flesh creep. Then St. Sepulchre's chimed ten o'clock, and the party adjourned to their beds; whilst the voices of jolly toppers in the tap-room below

were sweetly carolling the ballad of Lord Tom Noddy—

Of rope dancers I have seen a score,
Madame Saqui, Angelli, and little Blackmore,
But to see a man swing, at the end of a string,
With his neck in a noose, will be quite a new thing.
(*Chorus*) Quite a new thing! Quite a new thing.

Glory be to us all, we are a cheerful people!



BOOK IV.

CHAPTER I.

THE CARLTON CLUB.

WHEN the Marquis of Kingsgear left the police court in company with Mr. Sharpe that acute solicitor looked at his watch and observed that as it was nearly five o'clock, the Duke of Courthope would have certainly arrived from Beaumanoir, and would then be found waiting his son's arrival at that favourite meeting-place of Conservative noblemen in Pall Mall, which was established by the Duke of Wellington, during the Reform riots of 1831, as a bulwark against democracy, and numbers more dukes among its members than any similar institution yet invented.

The young man walked in a listless way down Regent Street and Waterloo Place, wondering for what object he was born and what purpose he served by his existence. He had nothing to do but attend guards and parade

now and then, escort a royal carriage, put on his armour at a levée or a drawing-room, and answer when he was called my Lord, as he was a hundred times a day by persons over whom he had no control and in whose fortunes he had no interest whatever. Life seemed to have no zest or prospect for him. When he had now and then felt a desire for promotion or some of those distinctions about which his brother officers seemed reasonably anxious, one or another of them had said, 'Come, come, Kingsgear, what's the use of this or that to you? If you send in an application you are sure to get it, and it makes no difference at all to you, while it will make me a man or a mouse.' The road to honours was so straight and open before him that they lost all value in his eyes. Commissions, appointments, rewards, special services were very small things to the heir of two dukedoms and half-a-dozen of the largest estates in the kingdom. If he could have followed the bent of his own inclination he would have travelled, or possibly devoted himself entirely to scientific pursuits, making thereby an escape from the rank and splendour which oppressed and weighed him down. He was never so

happy as when occupied with some work which made him forget he was a marquis, and more than once he had thought over the accounts of mysterious disappearances, and considered whether he could not slip away out of sight and mind altogether for a few years. Satiety had seized upon him though he was not twenty. He had no desires because he had only to wish and to have. He had no appetites because they were all gratified as soon as born. He was weary of amusement, and no kind of gambling or debauchery which sometimes help the idle rich to kill their days had any attractions for him. He did not want to win any one's money by bets on a horse race, he had enough and more than enough for his use as it was. It gave him no pleasure to see two or more poor brutes flogged and spurred till one thrust its nose a foot before the other's nose. He had no delight in sitting upon an uncomfortable seat while four violent young horses pulled his arms almost out of their sockets by leather straps attached to bars of steel in their mouths. To gallop over rough ground for miles after an animal which was of no use when caught was not sport to him, and when put up to his neck in a Scotch

hole to wait all night for deer he had been found fast asleep. What are called London pleasures were stale and flat to him. His temperament was cold, and devoid of sensuality. He had been used from childhood to the spare table of his French-bred mother, and had no taste for high seasoned dishes. When he was asked out to dinner he waited for a plain slice of meat, and seldom got enough to eat or got it plain. His favourite drink was seltzer water and raspberry syrup, which he never got at all ; so he left grand banquets very hungry, and grudged the time they took. Once he tried to interest himself in theatricals, and he still liked to see a good play, but before his presence had been observed three times in the stalls, he was invited behind the scenes by the lessee and manager. Then all the illusions of the stage and the footlights vanished ; and when the lessee assured him with a wink that he would guarantee his Lordship not only ten per cent. but many other pleasant things besides if he would take the whole theatre, actors, actresses and all into his own hands, Lord Kinsgear yawned and never went to sup with him again. His existence had become a mere weary round of dressing and

undressing, and doing things he did not want to do.

His Grace the Duke of Courthope, however, had as keen an enjoyment of life as ever. His phaeton, which was drawn up before the Carlton Club when Lord Kinsgear arrived, was the best appointed equipage in London. Its horses were matched to a hair; they were not only a perfect pair in size, height, and colour, but in the much more essential particulars of temper and action. They moved like well regulated clock-work, and the Duke had only to sit still, the model of a noble charioteer, while they picked their graceful, nimble way through streets and squares. His Grace was in the morning-room waiting for his son, and surrounded by a crowd of deferential people eager to tell him the latest news, and all they knew and all they did not know. An ex-premier, a future premier, the Conservative whip, the owner of the Derby favourite, and the owner of the Opera House were all with him, and the judge who had tried the last scandal case. They were all laughing, some of them had been betting on the probable numbers of a division in the Commons that night, and they were going to dine together

as soon as the House of Lords was up, to have the bets decided when the telegrams came in.

Lord Kinsgear, though not a member of the club, was well known to the porters, and passed the mahogany doors without question. He was in a manner born a member, and would certainly be elected as soon as he came of age ; so the porter merely said, ' His Grace is in the morning-room, my Lord,' and the young nobleman went straight into his father's presence.

When the Duke of Courthope saw his son enter the room he seized the ex-premier familiarly by the arm, and swinging him round walked to meet the Marquis, talking privately and earnestly.

' My son—Lord Lurker,' said the Duke, rather excitedly, looking from the ex-premier to Lord Kinsgear ; and then he added rapidly : ' The Ministry will be out in less than a week, and I have the offer of an appointment in the Household, or in Dublin, for you, so you had better think which you will have, and thank Lord Lurker, who has remembered you before any one else.' The Duke drew himself up with a sense of personal importance, half touching, half funny.

Lord Kingsgear looked down and appeared embarrassed, but he took the offered hand of Lord Lurker and stammered some commonplace words of acknowledgment, which the Duke supplemented in a manner somewhat fulsome and extravagant; as though it had been the most wonderful and honourable thing ever known, that a choice of situations not unlike those of grooms or footmen should have been offered to his son.

‘I shall never forget the kindness which has been shown to me by my Suvrin while life lasts,’ said the Duke, who pronounced one of the royal appellations in the old-fashioned way, and he seemed offended that his son did not evince a gratitude equally demonstrative.

Lord Lurker said he would take care that both places should be kept open for a week, and then hurried off to the House of Commons with the future premier, Lord Comyn, who had talked himself into a position of great importance, by never giving an opinion or saying anything with a clear meaning.

‘I think you should have been a little more civil,’ said the Duke dryly to his son when they were gone. ‘There are plenty of people who

would give their ears for such an offer.' His Grace settled his handsome whiskers in his cravat with a displeased air, for he felt that the fruits of his influence and Parliamentary connection were slighted by his son.

Lord Kinsgear explained that he had no intention of showing any want of politeness or good manners ; but the Duke's feathers had been a good deal ruffled, and his voice was almost stern when he spoke next.

'Have you seen Sharpe?' his Grace asked, impatiently.

'Yes,' said Lord Kinsgear, 'and I have got so much money for you in my pocket that I cannot button my coat.'

'Well,' answered his Grace, whose face immediately broke into that frank and delightful smile of his, 'fortunately there's the phaeton outside, I suppose we can lift it into the boot? Come down stairs. If old Boldjo or Grimby were to see us handling bank-notes together, they would be coming round us with some of their confounded subscriptions, and Boulton would carry the news all over the town before he was an hour older.'

The father and son descended from the

upper world together down into one of those dim little boxes under ground, which are supposed to be dressing-rooms, but which are commonly used for election purposes and private interviews between the members of the club and strangers who come to see them on business. The money having there changed hands, and the Duke of Courthope being restored to high good humour, his Grace recurred again to the kindness of the Minister who had actually bound himself by a promise before the seals of office were in his hands.

‘My own’ opinion is rather in favour of Dublin,’ said the Duke, knitting his brows reflectively as if discussing an affair of vast importance. ‘The Household is all very well, but, by George, if you slip up you’re done for. You may have your own way more with the Lord-Lieutenant. They offered to make me Viceroy five years ago, through Colonel Spinner, the whip, whom you saw with us just now, but I would not spend the money necessary upon it. Lord Lackington is to go out now; he has plenty of money and a new title. He is sure to make up a good deal to you; but you must steer clear of his daughters,’ added the Duke,

laughing, 'for he has got a son, and is sure to spend all his money on his place before it has done with him. Lord Hanaper will be Chief Secretary; he has just come of age, and has taken a double first at Oxford I hear, besides being the Premier's nephew. Lord Algernon Placard-Cardwell, your cousin, Frank Simony, and Augustus Trecorne will be your brother aide-de-camps, and you may pass a season very pleasantly between the Phoenix Park and the Kildare Club.'

'My Lord!' cried a loud, excited voice at the door, while an impatient knock was heard for admittance.

'Come in,' said the Duke of Courthope, more or less displeased that any one should presume to disturb him without express permission to do so.

'My Lord,' said Colonel Spinner, the Conservative whip, for it was he, and he spoke in an agitated way, 'have you heard the news?' There's a mutiny in India, and our vote of want of confidence must be shelved. We are bound not to harass the Ministry till the trouble's over.'

'By George!' thundered the Duke in amazement; 'that's mighty sudden. Tell me all

about it.' And he listened with curious emotion whilst the Conservative whip poured out to him the tidings which had just come by telegraph, after which he hurried to scatter his intelligence into other ears. Then Lord Kinsgear spoke :

'Father,' said he, with a flushed cheek and a kindling eye, addressing the Duke with an affectionate earnestness not habitual to him—'Father, let me volunteer for active service in one of the regiments which will be ordered out for India.'

'By all means. Most proper,' answered the Duke of Courthope. 'We will go together to the Commander-in-Chief at once. The country is in danger, and your place is in the front. Egad, I wish I was ten years younger, I would put on my sword and swing into my cavalry saddle again.'

His Grace looked very gallant and knightly as he spoke. There was not a nobleman in the kingdom who would have ridden to battle with a braver or a calmer heart. Born in other times, he would have done England as good service as Chandos or Sydney. He was merely out of his place in an age of commerce, and did not know how to deal with it, but directly the

sound of the clarion was heard from afar, all the instincts of a race of soldiers awoke in him. A courtier in expectancy, a petty place-hunter but an hour ago, he was transfigured into a knight and a warrior, ready to give his only son, his very life, for England.

CHAPTER II.

OUTWARD BOUND.

THE seaport of Southampton, a county in itself, is one of the liveliest towns in England. Its climate is mild, the scenery around it lovely with woods and waters. Something joyous and agreeable is always going on there. Provisions of all kinds are cheap and abundant, and the whole population of the place seems to be perpetually feasting, courting, laughing, merry-making, and driving about in little pony carriages, which are made to perfection nowhere else. It must have been always a cheerful town, for even when it had been pillaged by the Danes and sacked by the French and Genoese, those foreigners considered it such a salubrious residence that many of them made it their winter quarters and afterwards married or settled in the neighbourhood. It is still a popular strangers' home, a larger, airier 'Lay-

cessetare Squarr,' or one of our international cities of refuge—only gayer than the rest of them.

We, the present great Britons, having now determined so firmly never to be slaves that we have set our resolution to music, and sing it lustily out to each other over our cups, of course think it becoming to forget all about the Danes, the French, and the Genoese, save when we draw bills upon them at usance for commercial purposes like fine great British gentlemen not unacquainted with vulgar fractions. 'Pooh, my dear sir,' says Consols, M.P. and drysalter, 'Danes, indeed! Very good people, I *dare* say (oh the bold Consols, what dare he not say, the substantial man?); 'but no army, no navy, no *trade* to speak of. The French are all lunatics. Everything worth having in France belongs to us. We have nearly all her scrip, shares, and public companies. If we sent a few sheriff's officers over to Paris, Lyons, and Marseilles, we might sell up France, goods and chattels. The Genoese are filagree silver-smiths and opera-singers with a debased currency. Not a butcher in their city knows how to cut a sirloin of beef, not one of their cooks knows how to roast a

joint or boil a potato. We could knock their fetid docks and rotten rickety warehouses about their ears with a single iron-clad—Armstrong, you know, and that kind of thing, or Whitworth.'

So the pretty modern city of Southampton, which sees a good deal of Consols, M.P., and his disciples, having an extremely well-frequented stump for peripatetic politicians, wears a very general appearance of festivity. It is musical with barrel organs, and has some of the best perambulating brass bands in England, where street music is better than anywhere else in the world. It is alive with tumblers, cheap-jacks, conjurers, gipsies, and flower-girls. Rare and scanty are the memorials of the feudal stronghold where, once upon a time, King Canute lived, and Queen Elizabeth held her court; and that fifth Charles, who was a world's wonder, took ship and sailed away in his high splendid misery, passing from pale Britannia like some portentous shadow. Nothing but an ancient low-browed gate near a coachmaker's shop remains upstanding of the storied past; and the Southampton of to-day is historically identified only with a joke of Lord Palmerston, a blunder of Garibaldi, the Hartley Institute, and her

Majesty's Indian Service. It is on the highway to Spain and Portugal, to Malta and Gibraltar, to the lovely Ionian Islands, which we have abandoned, to Turkey, which we are for ever so anxiously watching, and to that magnificent empire, far in the eastern seas, which is slipping day by day from the uncertain grasp of masters who do not dare to think, and fear to act, lest newspapers and majorities should devour them. We do not deny that it is a superb inheritance which was bequeathed to us about a hundred years ago by that obscure Robert Clive of Shropshire, and Mr. Hastings of Daylesford; but we have cut off the entail. If another Clive and another Hastings were to arise and endeavour to resettle our estate upon our descendants, we should worry and impeach them as we did before. Very shrewd, practical people, we English, with uncommonly clear ideas of our own interests; also an intense love of valour and wisdom, with much scorn for official and military mediocrity.

Likewise a fine appetite for broiled sole belongs to certain of our upper classes, and nowhere is it enjoyed to more perfection than at Radley's Hotel. Therefore, upon a certain

morning, not long after the news of the Indian mutiny reached London, a large party were seated at breakfast in that inn, where more sad partings have taken place than anywhere else in Britain. It is nearly always fine weather at Southampton and the air was so soft that the large bow windows of a pleasant room stood wide open, and the party seated round the solid mahogany table at Radley's could see the good ship *Tanjore*, which had been freighted by government to carry troops by steam to India. The blue-Peter was flying at her mast-head, and the hurrying of eager footsteps to and fro upon the deck betokened that she would lift her anchors very soon.

There were at least five hundred places that day at Southampton, where hope was whispered amidst tears and sobs, and where eyes kindled betwixt pain and pride, as sons and brothers, with some husbands, said farewell to their dearest before they went away to fight in Paynimrie. The persons with whom this story is concerned, however, were the Duke of Courthope, his cousin, charming Lady Overlaw, Colonel Oakes, of the 1st Lancers, General Violet, who was going out to India in com-

mand of the expedition, vice Sir Shewell Staffers, recalled, and one of the Lords of the Admiralty, who had met together at the Duke of Courthope's invitation: His Grace, with perfect good taste, had come round to Southampton in his yacht, to take farewell of his son, the Marquis of Kinsgear, who, tired of the inanities of London life, had exchanged from the Lifeguards into the 1st Lancers. His Lordship had been taught from his childhood that soldiering is the only employment fit for noblemen, and he looked extremely well and self-satisfied in his new uniform, for he felt that he had at last an occupation more exhilarating than signing his name upon sheets of stamped parchment. Such great folk seldom make much fuss about their sentiments. Probably nothing but the call of the last trumpet would have visibly disturbed any one of them.

The Minister was quite a new type of politician who has lately sprung up in the public life of England—the mushroom growth of hazy weather, possibly; at least there were some who hoped it would not strike root in our soil and flourish. His name was Schnapsgelt—Hermann Schnapsgelt. He was a man of

foreign origin, who had been an eminent bill broker in the city of London, and had a remarkable head for figures. He had never turned his attention to politics, but he had taken them up when they came in his way as a business investment. This is how he chanced to be placed as a manager of the British navy. There was a certain Lord Dullington who had been made a premier by rival jealousies, and had promptly got into a scrape with a budget prepared by his brother-in-law, who knew much of fox-hunting, but nothing of finance. Dullington's brother-in-law was, however, a man of resource, and having been in his youth attached to the Mission at Frankfort, where Hermann Schnapsgelt kept open house, he had recommended the premier to go to Hermann Schnapsgelt for advice in their mutual difficulties. The German bill broker was at first very obsequious, and having settled in England, bringing his hospitalities with him, he expressed a hope that they would dine with him at Streatham, but would have nothing further to do with them, except on Sundays. His case was not unlike that of a Mr. Baring, who, when offered a post in the Ministry, replied that 'he never wasted his

time.' Schnapsgelt had inherited a business which had branch establishments at Paris, Berlin, St. Petersburg, Rome, Madrid, and Vienna. He had no particular interest in England except as a centre of commerce for the time being. He thought the climate damp and foggy, and would much sooner have lived at Naples or Constantinople as soon as the thing could be settled that way. He was a cosmopolitan, and did not really care a button what nation was uppermost. All his property was in convertible paper and could be easily carried in a good-sized portmanteau. There would be always Government loans and stocks enough somewhere or other to increase it. No revolution or change in the affairs of Great Britain or any other State could seriously affect him. If our three kingdoms had been suddenly submerged in the sea, he would only have lost a mahogany desk or two, a chair and a carpet, for he rented his counting-house in London, and was a merchant who had not ten thousand pounds' worth of perishable goods in the world. Obviously a difficult fish to catch, Mr. Hermann Schnapsgelt; still he was caught, because, like other men, he had his weak point. He had

observed that Austrian, Prussian, and Russian statesmen kept him waiting about their ante-rooms and snubbed him because he had not a handle to his name. His firm had not a representative nobleman, and they wanted one, because he would make a useful commercial traveller. So when Premier Dullington came to him again and again, with that miserable maze of figures in his weak, weary head, Schnapsgelt said at last that he thought he might make arrangements with his firm to retire for a little while and set the accounts of Great Britain to rights, for a place near the Cabinet, where there were a good many contracts to be disposed of, and a barony or two. So the Premier, a most worthy and conscientious nobleman, having consented to these terms, the Right Honourable Hermann Schnapsgelt, M.P., had come down to Southampton in the routine way to see some British troops off in a ship which he had hired at a high price, having observed that the feelings of the public towards the army had undergone a great change, and thinking truly it might throw some obstacle in the way of the speedy realisation of his wishes about the baronies, if he did not show an osten-

tation anxiety for the comfort of military men in times of crisis.

Lieutenant-Colonel Oakes, who commanded the 1st Lancers, was the ideal type of a soldier, brave, frank, straightforward. During the twenty years he had been in the army he had never given or disobeyed an unreasonable order. As far back as the name of Oakes could be traced in our annals, it had been borne, and worthily borne, by a soldier. The Colonel had a collection of arms which had been gathered by one of his ancestors after another upon every battle-field where the flag of England had been displayed—long two-handed swords from the Crusades, horse-pistols from Blenheim and Oudenarde, scimitars from Egypt, daggers from Arikera, and more modern arms from Assaye and from Waterloo. Better soldier, better gentleman, never wore a spur. He had accepted the Duke of Courthope's invitation to show his respect for the peerage, for which he had a mighty old-fashioned liking, that had nothing in common with meanness or servility, and he honestly wished to welcome his new officer, Lord Kinsgear.

General Violet, who was about to win such

deathless fame at Delhi and Lucknow, was a courtier so frail and delicate that it would seem a breath of wind might blow him away. It was said by ribald cornets and impudent ensigns that he wore stays and combed his hair with a spoon ; but he was so calm under fire, such a chivalrous paladin in battle, so cool in danger, so thoughtful in the camp and on the march, that war-worn veterans bowed their heads respectfully when his name was mentioned, and thought that he was so great they could not remember whether he had any weaknesses.

The breakfast was drawing to its close when the Duke of Courthope rose, and filling his glass with champagne which had been sent from his own yacht and stood in iced decanters on the table, he bowed with infinite grace to General Violet, and drank success to the expedition in a courteous and effective speech of few words. The General answered rather affectedly till he spoke of the fighting in store, and then his delicate cheek flushed and his pale blue eye kindled with a strange fire ; for the hero peeped out from the carpet knight. Mr. Schnapsgelt then got up, and in short business-like language proposed the health of Lord Kinsgear,

saying some sensible things about the accommodation and provisions he would find aboard ship, where every convenience had been provided for his Lordship—‘and of course,’ added the Right Honourable gentleman with a queer look, ‘for all the officers of the gallant 1st.’ Lord Kinsgear answered, and modestly asked permission to propose the health of Colonel Oakes, dwelling upon the pleasure which he felt at the prospect of serving under such a distinguished soldier. Then the Duke of Courthope drank to Mr. Schnapsgelt, and with considerable tact referred to his paramount authority; which made the financier smile inwardly, for he knew that he had no authority, and did not wish to have any, being merely a lay figure in the State, like other Ministers, but he gallantly replied by drinking the health of Lady Overlaw, and forbore to talk politics. Her Ladyship thanked him wittily, for ladies make admirable complimentary speeches, and bowed over her glass to the Duke. After this General Violet and
Colonel Oakes got up, and shook hands with their host, who looked very tall and stately, and was most kind. The Lord of the Admiralty made an excuse to leave the room,

and was soon seen walking towards the *Tanjore*, arm-in-arm with his secretary, that the reporters of the Press might see him.

‘Good-bye, and good fortune,’ said the Duke simply to his son. The young man stood very near to his father, with his sword, which he had just taken from the wall, unslung in his left hand. The Duke of Courthope took it, drew it, tried its temper, and then girded it round his son’s waist. As he did so the stately head drooped, and his lips, for the first time in his life, just touched Lord Kingsgear’s forehead. The Marquis pressed his father’s hand silently. There was a mute compact between them. It meant: ‘Return again another conqueror of our ancient race, or return no more,’ and the young man’s heart and hand had mutely answered, ‘I will.’

Then said Lady Overlaw, ‘Beau cousin, I have a parting gift for you.’ She handed him a scarf, and, as he put it on, she knelt down gracefully, and fastened upon his heels a pair of gold spurs of the regimental pattern. ‘You will ride with my colours to the front,’ she said, ‘and my parting gift is a charger.’

‘Very kind,’ said the Duke, in his grand

way, and then he added half-aside to his son—
'Perfectly broke. Tom Sheward chose the horse for her. It is a golden bay, with black points, and I rode it myself yesterday with the troops in the park. They say that English horses do not thrive in India, but you need pay no attention to that.' His Grace was so accustomed to see difficulties vanish before him that he could understand them vaguely: and considered even the vicissitudes of climate as something that only regarded common people.

CHAPTER III.

'THE GEORGE.'

AT Southampton, and at every other town between Southampton and London, there is an inn called the 'George.' There is no particular reason why the Hampshire people should be so demonstratively loyal to the House of Hanover ; but it is certain that they are so, and though the 'George' inns are not such fine inns as the new monster hotels which we have imitated from the Germans and Americans, they are comfortable old English abiding places, with sound ideas of roast and boiled and beer.

While the grand party invited by the Duke of Courthope were breakfasting at Radley's there was a very different group of people assembled at the 'George,' a tavern of humbler pretensions, situated near the water side, at the bottom of the High Street. Mr. and Mrs. Brown and Mr. Mowledy had all found their way from

Wakefield-in-the-Marsh, to take leave of the soldier boy who was about to drift for ever away from them in search of fortune.

Young Brown met his mother with rather a shame-face at first, and felt by no means so proud of his uniform in her presence as he was out of it. But by-and-by, perceiving, rather by some mysterious instinct than from anything she said, that his mother was not really displeased with the career he had chosen, he began to take heart, and patronised her, as boys will, and showed her about the town.

As for Thomas Brown, the events which had lately succeeded each other in his family had been altogether too much for him. First, there had been that queer start in London, of which he could neither make head nor tail, except that Madge had been ill-used by somebody he would have liked to punch till he was tired. Then there was that surprising seven-months' child of his first 'listing for a sojer, an naew gwine to Injy,' why, he could not make out, seeing that the boy had a good home and plenty of victuals.

Moreover, Tom Brown was utterly lost in his Sunday clothes, and almost disappeared in a

portentous blue coat with brass buttons, twenty years old, and much too large for him, except at the waist, where it was too short, and displayed a pair of pocket flaps half the way up his back. Upon the whole an uncomfortable coat, and Mr. Brown passed the day chiefly by the taproom fire of the 'George' inn wondering whether he might take it off. Not so his wife. She quite bloomed back into youth and beauty under the excitement which oppressed and fatigued her husband. Her step was as light and elastic as that of a girl while she walked arm-in-arm with her tall son through the streets of the merry seaport. A line from Mr. Mowledy to Colonel Oakes had obtained the young recruit a day's leave to accompany his family, and it is doubtful whether mother and son had ever before been so happy as during the last hours they ever spent together.

Madge had brought her ten pounds with her, carefully wrapped up in paper, and had given her son injunctions not to open the packet till he got to India, fearing with motherly foresight that the precious hoard she had kept for him so long might waste away before he really wanted it if he touched it now. She had

brought him, too, a very respectable kit of linen, and much flannel, which rather embarrassed him when he got to his destination. Whatever she had of value, or that she thought might be turned to some account—an old silver pencil-case, a turquoise ring perhaps worth half-a-crown, and a broken garnet brooch which she had found among her things and had mended, were brightened up and scoured till they shone, and put aside for him. The Curate had added a Bible and two sovereigns to these treasures as his gift, and Tom Brown had bought a serviceable clasp knife at Dronington, that being the instrument he had personally found of most use in life; and his son had often occasion to rejoice, on many a toilsome march, and at many a night bivouac, that it had not been forgotten. He said afterwards that this clasp knife was the best friend he had during the campaign which followed, and it now hangs up in his library, a well-worn relic of the wars.

They dined together at one o'clock, father, mother, and son, Mr. Mowledy being discreetly absent: too perfect a gentleman to intrude his presence where it could only be a source of embarrassment. Tom Brown took almost a

solemn leave of his son, bidding him be an honest man let what would come of it, and as he had turned to soldiering to set about it with a will. Then he drew out his big silver watch, as large as a turnip, and thrust it awkwardly into his son's hand.

'She had better go wi' yow, lad,' said the rough fellow. 'I' wunt much matter to Oi wats o'clock till you be baek wi' us agin.'

His wife gave him a sounding kiss in exchange for his watch, and called him her 'old man' with rustic fondness, after which they all took a deep draught of beer from the same pot in silence, Mrs. Brown joining for the first time in the family potations.

'T yale be sweeter, Madge, since thee hast put thy beak into 't, wench,' said her husband, and, lighting his pipe, he sat behind it, blinking like an owl, watching wife and first-born with a tenderness perhaps none the less deep and eloquent for being inarticulate. They sat at a little distance from him near the window, while he smoked by the fire. The mother and son were wonderfully alike; and to-day, looking as she did so young and spirited and handsome, they might have been taken for brother and sister.

They did not speak. William Brown had exhausted all the gallant babble with which he had tried to hide his feelings in the morning, when he patronised and protected his mother, stopped her to gape at the Indian jugglers who tumbled for pence in the streets, or to listen to the German bands, who performed before every hotel where there was a new arrival of importance. All his boyish bravado was gone now, and his heart sank with a sad foreboding that mayhap he should see that sweet matronly face, and those dear, loving, motherly eyes no more. Possibly she may have answered his unuttered thoughts unconsciously and without speech. She took the boy's shapely hand in her own, and patted and caressed it as she sat beside him, cheering and comforting him with unspoken hopes and silent blessings, and an inward assurance of his future welfare. She was very proud of him ; she loved him above everything on earth ; she would have died for him ; he was the one link betwixt her and happiness. When he was gone, her life would be very dull ; but she had no wish to detain him. She would not have stopped him on his way now if she could have done so. Something told her

that her boy had found the occupation fitted to him, and that all was for the best.

'Mrs. Brown—William,' said the mild voice of the Curate, interrupting her at length in these day-dreams, 'the *Tanjore* will be ready for sea in two hours, and whatever you have left to do must be done at once. If you will come with me, William, I will present you to your new colonel.'

So the kit of linen and flannel, with stout pairs of boots, and a large home-made cake, and some bottles of currant wine, with two hams and a fitch of bacon for contingencies, were hoisted into a donkey-cart, which Tom Brown had hired for the purpose that morning, and the soldier, with his kinsfolk and the parson of his parish, walked soberly to the wharf where the great ship lay.

CHAPTER IV.

GOOD-BYE, SWEETHEART.

THE *Tanjore* got slowly under weigh, and as the Curate found out that she would anchor again in Southampton Roads to wait for the latest news and despatches from land, an hour after the advertised time of her departure, the little company from Wakefield-in-the-Marsh remained on board till she got into deep water ; being permitted to do so by the special intercession of Colonel Oakes, whom the Curate had already interested in his old pupil and fellow-fisherman.

Mr. Mowledy almost felt himself young again, as he talked with the Colonel about their school days at Winchester, and walked up and down the deck conversing with the smart officer who bore such a perfume of life, enjoyment, and adventure about him.

‘You don’t remember Courthope at Oxford, do you? Kinsgear he was then.’

‘No,’ answered the Curate, ‘he was after my time; but I have often heard of him.’

It somehow happens that poor clergymen generally *do* hear of the noblemen who go to their college, and Mr. Mowledy had often derived a quiet satisfaction from the thought that he was educated fully up to the standard of the highest class of Englishmen.

‘Ah, I am sorry for that,’ continued Colonel Oakes, ‘but it doesn’t much matter, I can introduce you: and it is worth your while to know the Duke, as you take an interest in young Brown—because his Grace’s son, Lord Kinsgear, has just got a troop in my regiment, and, as all his letters and parcels are sure to come out in the Government despatch bags post free and carriage free, you can send anything you have for young Brown under cover to Kinsgear, if you are on terms with the Duke.’

The Curate was quite worldly wise enough to acknowledge the advantage of a friend at court under every possible circumstance, and he said so.

‘Well,’ continued the Colonel, straddling all

about the deck with his bold cavalry swagger, 'there's the Duke's yacht *Osprey* in the offing yonder. He has taken refuge there, I suppose, with the General and a large party to be out of the din going on here, but he is sure to come on board with Kinsgear, so look sharp and stick near me that you may not be out of the way at the right moment, for time is almost up I fancy. The captain came on board with the latest mails five minutes ago.'

As the Colonel spoke a signal flew up to the masthead of the *Tanjore*, and was immediately answered by the yacht, whose boats were already manned and lowered. The boatswain's whistle piped all hands on deck, for there was man-of-war's discipline on board the *Osprey*, and presently the Duke of Courthope, Lord Kinsgear, and his guests, were seen descending the companion ladder, while the boat crews held their oars aloft in the attitude of saluting. His Grace, the Marquis, General Violet, and the Right Hon. Hermann Schnapsgelt, stepped one after the other into the long boat. The Marquis's valet and stud groom got into the other, and several cases of champagne were put after them.

'Give way, boys,' cried the captain of the

Duke's yacht, who had taken the helm of the long boat. He was an ex-lieutenant in the navy, who had lost an arm at Navarino, and he had been glad to accept domestic service, because he had no interest at the Admiralty. 'Give way, boys!' cried this veteran, jollily. The crew bent to their oars, and the long boat of the *Osprey*, with its illustrious freight, flew over the sea towards the *Tanjore*, where the captain of the steamer, Colonel Oakes, and the chief officers of the Queen's and merchant's services stood waiting to receive them. They were all in high spirits, and a brisk breeze which was blowing set the very ends of their neck-handkerchiefs dancing and fluttering. It had, however, prevented Lady Overlaw from accompanying them, lest she should not appear to advantage wet through and raked by the wind.

'I feel twenty years younger, Violet,' said the Duke, as the spray from a wave struck the boat's prow and dashed over him. 'I have not had such a ducking since we ran for the coast of Norway together to look after ptarmigan.'

'Why don't you make the voyage with us, Duke, at all events to Aden? The *Osprey*

would go out as fast as we shall, and you might be home for the grouse on your Scotch moors,' observed General Violet.

'What do you say, Benbow?' asked the Duke laughingly of his captain. 'Would the *Osprey* weather a white squall?'

'Aye, aye, sir,' answered Lieutenant Benbow, R.N. 'She would stand up to anything that the Mediterranean could show her, and more too.'

'Will you join us if we run out with the first wind and give Dullington the go-by?' said the Duke to the Right Hon. Hermann Schnapsgelt. 'Or are the cares of State too much for you?'

'I am afraid I am not a free man, Duke,' answered the junior Lord, who did not take a joke very quickly.

'Egad, I have a great mind to go myself,' continued the Duke. 'Is the ship well found with provisions, Benbow?'

'Plenty of junk, your Grace!' replied the old sailor, slyly, 'if that will do.'

'Rough it. Nothing like roughing it,' said the Duke, showing those handsome white ivory teeth of his, glistening and even as ever. His

Grace had not the smallest intention of setting out on a broiling voyage to Egypt; there were at least a hundred and fifty reasons why he could not have done so if he would. He was involved in perfect mazes of correspondence which nobody but he himself could conduct, and which could not be left for a week to take care of themselves without an explosion, which would have been a windfall to all the cheap newspapers in the world. There were half-a-dozen people he was obliged to call on or to meet on particular days and at appointed hours. There was a whole family somewhere in Pimlico who knew him as Mr. Johnson, and who had for ten years believed that he was an old gentleman's steward, who could only get leave to come out on Saturdays. He had bills and notes of hand at short date to be renewed, annuities constantly falling due to pay, or he had to pacify and negotiate with the annuitants. He had children's schooling to pay, Chancery suits to answer by interrogatories, arbitrations which had been going on for a dozen years, and might be suddenly brought to a close if not attended to. He was trustee under marriage settlements; he was guardian of noble young

wards who were travelling in Syria, and out-running their credit. He frequently received a score of letters by a single post, and could no more have absented himself from England than a horse harnessed to a mill wheel can go for a pleasant roll in the meadows. Noblemen have their troubles like other people, only the Duke of Courthope just now had forgotten his, for he had lunched delightfully; and besides he was naturally courteous and kind, so that he delighted to give pleasure to those about him. It was a very ingenious compliment to assure them that they were bound upon a voyage which he, the Duke of Courthope, would not disdain to make himself.

The Minister of State fell back and made way, the general commanding in chief of an army in war time stood aside, the naval veteran of a dozen sea fights got up and held his arm in the form of a banister, the boat's crew lifted their oars aloft again in salute, and then the Duke of Courthorpe rose from his place of honour at the long boat's stern, a smile and kind word on his lips, and stepped on board the East Indiaman, followed at a respectful distance by his gallant company. The shrill whistle of

the boatswain of the *Tanjore* piped out its honours to the great nobleman, in correct man-of-war's notes, as his foot touched the vessel's plank, for there, too, the captain had notions of discipline, and was also a naval officer, who had been pushed out of his country's service to make way for the son of a distinguished yarn contractor, aforetime in office.

'Mowledy!' Colonel Oakes called hastily out to the Curate, 'bring up young Brown's mother. She seems a decent looking body, and the Duke is very good-natured, perhaps he'll take notice of her. He's always doing kind things, and the General is with him, which is better still.'

The Curate turned to look for Madge, and found her leaning against the bulwarks of the ship, deadly pale, and cowering as if she had been struck down. Her large blue eyes, almost starting out of her head, were fixed upon the handsome figure of the Duke of Courthope, who stood with his head thrown back and a winning smile upon his lips, paying lofty compliments to the captain of the Indiaman on the state of the *Tanjore*.

'Mrs. Brown!' said the Curate, gently taking her arm and trying to rouse her; 'that tall

gentleman just come on board is the Duke of Courthope, and standing near him is his son, the Marquis of Kingsgear, William's captain. Colonel Oakes has promised to say a good word for your son ; and you had better stand near me in case they should wish to ask you any questions about him.'

But Madge was far beyond questions and answers for a while ; the fixed and rigid look upon her poor startled face had gradually relaxed, her eyes closed as if to shut out the sight of some evil thing that had haunted them, and she fainted, so that the good-natured intentions of Colonel Oakes and the Curate were frustrated.

'What's the matter, Oakes?' inquired the Duke, seeing the two gentlemen look a little vexed.

'Only a woman fainted. She is the mother of one of my raw recruits in Lord Kingsgear's troop, and my old friend the parson here wanted to present her to him,' answered the Colonel.

'Bless my soul ! Woman fainted ! Benbow, do you happen to have your medicine chest in the boat ?' exclaimed the Duke, speaking

rather thickly, for the reaction of the wine and sea air was overtaking him. 'Where is she?' and his Grace strode to the place where Madge lay deprived of consciousness by some sudden emotion stronger than her powers of resistance. Her husband was seated on an officer's bullock trunk behind her, and supported her head on his coarse knees, gnarled and knotted by a lifetime of labour. He looked up with blinking puzzled eyes at the stately noble, so straight and tall, so condescending and impatient of grief or sickness.

'Is there any danger?' inquired the Curate of the ship's doctor, and the surgeon of the 1st, who had both hurried benevolently to offer their services at the first call for them.

'Oh dear, no!' said the Duke, overriding disease and pain with his high-pitched strident voice, which brooked no contradiction. 'It is only the heat of the weather and excitement, and that kind of thing.' His Grace never would admit that anybody was in danger till they were dead. His mind had no place for pity in it, it was so full of grandeur.

'She is very weak, poor thing,' remarked the surgeon of the 1st, compassionately, 'and,

that hectic flush, which looked so pretty half-an-hour ago upon her cheeks, does not promise her a long life.' As he spoke, and administered some simple cordial to her, Madge slowly opened her eyes, and the colour which had attracted the army surgeon's attention came back to her wan cheeks and lit them up again. The Duke of Courthope passed his hand across his forehead, as if he were trying to remember something he had forgotten, but without success, and it was not until Madge had been lifted into the last boat for shore, and the Duke was speeding back again to his yacht, that he recollected the country girl he had admired on the night which he passed at the 'Chequers' inn, when he had been thrown out of the Clouddale hunt by the lameness of a favourite horse. Then he turned very pale; an anxious expression came into his countenance, and it was succeeded by that determined wicked Wyldwyl look, which appeared in old busts and portraits at Beaumanoir, and which had evidently been seen upon the features of many generations of his ancestors when troubled or angry.

As the boat which carried Madge and her husband with their friend the Curate back to

Southampton parted from that which bore the Duke of Courthope ever farther and farther in an opposite direction, the band of the 1st struck up the old soldier tune of 'The Girl I left behind me,' to which generation after generation of our troops have said good-bye to home and country when they went away to the wars. Then from boat and from terrace and balcony in the town—on the pier, and along the pleasant shores of the Hampshire coast, there went up prayers to God from fervent lips and over-burthened hearts. White kerchiefs fluttered out their kisses and blessings that the winds might bear them ever farther—farther than speech, farther than sound.

The crew of the *Osprey's* long boat, and the clumsy fleet of barges from the town, having got clear of the troop ship's mighty draught, rested on their oars to see the last of her. The Duke of Courthope stood erect and proud, waving his hat to Lord Kinsgear, who might be plainly seen a prominent figure on the quarter-deck between General Violet and the colonel of his regiment. Madge also stood up, supported on the one side by her husband, and the other by the curate of her village,

straining her fond eyes towards the spot where only a mother's vision could discern her boy among the crowd of soldiers who leant cheering or weeping tearlessly over the ship's side, about the forecastle. At last the huge paddles of the East Indiaman turned heavily round with a mighty thud, the sails of the *Tanjore* swelled, flapped and swelled again steadily, bellying to their work; and as women wailed with sharp cries, and strong men hid their faces from each other, the Union Jack was hoisted, and the crowded transport stood out to sea.

CHAPTER V.

MRS. BROWN.

THAT was the last time Madge ever saw the Duke of Courthope ; and she died soon afterwards. She had met him once at the commencement of her life, and she now met him again at its close. Nothing had ever effaced the image of the handsome nobleman from the poor ignorant woman's memory. She had been married ; she was a faithful wife and a contented mother, but he had taken the bloom and joy from her existence, nevertheless. What could he have said to her during that brief time, upon a stormy autumn evening which they passed together when she was but a girl, and he little more than a boy ? What do fine gentlemen generally say to village girls who captivate their fancy ? The young Duke had been fascinated by the rustic beauty. He had given her ten pounds, and, perhaps, intended to come

again and again, when at leisure. It was a notable project, and such a one as hath been often formed and executed by wealth and idleness at a loss for a day's amusement. But it so chanced that his Grace had been caught up and whirled away by a vortex of pleasure. He had lost a fortune at a horse race, and won another, then hurried away to Paris to spend it before it melted in his purse. There he had met Mademoiselle Zephyrine and Madame Désirée with that queenlike Pantaleoni of the Italian stage, in whose fetters he had been led captive about Europe for a whole month. Then he had had adventures, had gambled, fought duels, had married and been separated by chance or inclination, and had then fallen into a sea full of sharks and difficulties; having had ever since to swim for his life with the sharks after him as we have seen. So that he had forgotten poor Madge till Mr. Sharpe had all at once recalled her existence to him by the strange tidings that she was heiress of those great estates which had been brought into the Courthope family by the good Duchess, wife of a deceased Duke, now long since dead and buried. Then he had sometimes thought of her with a sort of

terror, and had dreaded lest she should some day start up with a dreadful solicitor behind her, and put him in grave peril or to grievous charges. Once or twice he had seriously considered if there were any prudent means of getting rid of her ; and it might have been a bad thing for Madge if his Grace had known of her arrest by the police. It would have been quite possible that she would next have been heard of some distance from England. Only a few days ago he had sent for Mr. Sharpe, and inquired in that light, easy way of his whether ‘those Browns of Wakefield could not be vexed a little by Dick Porteous’s trustees, and induced to emigrate.’ Mr. Sharpe had promised to think of it, had thought of it, and, being a well-meaning man, had come to the conclusion that it would be better to leave them alone, ‘unless they showed their teeth at any time.’

‘By Jove,’ replied the Duke, biting his lips, ‘if they begin to show their teeth it will be too late to collar them ; I would rather you got them off at once !’ His Grace was a wiser and more resolute man than the Yorkshire attorney. Fully aware of his own strength, and never having been thwarted—never having been op

posed to any one who could resist him, he was very brave. If left to his own devices, he would have ridden down to Wakefield, laid hands upon the Browns without more ado, shipped them to South Australia, and left them to their remedy, with a hint to an under-secretary at the Colonial Office to help them. Mr. Sharpe, however, being a man who had risen from humble beginnings, always liked to have the letter of the law upon his side. The bold stroke of kidnapping and transporting a country innkeeper and his family because they might some day be troublesome, and doing it entirely on his own hook, would never have entered Mr. Sharpe's head, and it made him stand aghast with astonishment when it was coolly proposed by the Duke as he lit a cigarette with his hunting-whip under his arm, and rode off to the cover side, Mr. Sharpe and amazement following him at a proper distance.

The Yorkshire solicitor would have done the same thing if he had as clearly seen the necessity for it, but he would have gone about his business in a different manner. Thomas Brown would have become involved somehow in difficulties with the quarter sessions. He would

have been had up before the magistrates again and again, on one pretext or another, till even Mr. Mowledy and his old neighbours had been brought to look shyly on him. Constables would have gone to the inn with search warrants. Actions for trover would have been commenced against him by the Lord of the Manor. His children would have been had up for trespass, and shut up in reformatories and penitentiaries as incorrigible vagabonds. If his wife had picked up a stick or an acorn in a lane, she would have been sent to pick oakum; and a something darker—more stealthy than ruin would have brooded over the ‘Chequers,’ till Mr. Mowledy, probably, or Mr. Sharpe himself, who would always have been friendly with them, had suggested emigration in their own interests, and would have generously given them a few pounds to pay their passage out; perhaps even he would have been so good as to recommend to them an emigrant ship rather overloaded and undermanned, never likely to reach its destination. Such things have been done, and we English defend our monetary concerns by grim and secret methods now and then.

Madge, however, had no notion that her appearance or disappearance was of importance to anybody—so little, that about fifteen years before, when an advertisement had appeared in the *Times*, offering a reward for Margaret Brown, otherwise Wyldwyl, and a heavy local lawyer had ridden over from Dronington to see if any costs were to be made out of it, old John Giles had sent him away without his errand, saying he knew ‘nowt, und wuddn’t know nowt;’ and now, if inquiries were to be made again, the panic which naturally seizes on the poor at the bare mention of a lawsuit, and Madge’s own experience when taken before a magistrate, would have certainly prompted her to deny her own identity rather than have anything further to do with legal persons or proceedings.

But the visit of the stranger huntsman had been the day dream and night thought of her existence for eighteen years, and now she had found out that the man whom she had supposed to be some country squire of a rank and degree comprehensible to her, or perhaps some Sir John or Sir Harry at most, was one of the demigods of the earth, a Duke, at whose name

even Mr. Mowledy bowed his head, and in whose august presence her son's colonel and the very Queen's general held their breath. A spell had been cast from the first over her, and now it grew stronger when all besides was fading away.

No wonder. It so frequently happens that a human existence is thus sicklied and blighted. There is no mercy for women. Untold millions of young girls who know nothing, have seen nothing, who have neither learning, wisdom, strength, nor experience, find themselves exposed in the dawn of womanhood to strong Temptation with his wily ways and subtle tongue. It is half touching and half ludicrous to see a skilful statesman, an orator whose fame fills many mouths, or a consummate soldier, bring all the force and subtlety of a master mind to deceive a child of seventeen. They would be ashamed to hoax a boy with falsehoods; but from the moment their victim is a frail foolish girl she becomes fair game to hunt and harry. Thus a gentleman will flush his quarry in a farm yard or an inn kitchen, striking it in the breast and leaving it fluttering to die or recover. It very seldom recovers. Its

daily life is made insipid to it after that sweet pain.

A bumpkin, however honest a fellow he may be, does not speak like a gentleman, or look like a gentleman, or act like one. Then come comparisons, and heartaches, and pinings for that which can never be, and which therefore had better not have been known. The familiar voices of old times, the homely pleasures, and simple vanities which sweeten life, have been made distasteful, and their best enjoyment is mingled with a sort of shame because of the corroding idea of something better and finer which is fixed for ever in the victim's mind.

Whether it was that Madge caught cold on her visit to the sea side, or whether the many conflicting emotions of the few weeks preceding had exhausted her strength, or whether the loss of blood had been too much for her, and in her eagerness to return home and see her son once more before his departure she had left the hospital too soon, certain it is that she arrived at Wakefield in a very weak state and was observed to sink rapidly. All through the summer she still managed to do such household work as could be got through without much

exertion. She cut the loaf for her children at their morning, midday, and evening meals, thus fulfilling to the last the functions of the lady, or breadgiver of her household ; but when the leaves began to fall she changed visibly from day to day. At first her busy footfall was missed soon after dawn, and she rose a little later, only coming down stairs when her eldest daughter had already set out the breakfast, and moving about very pale and quiet, but with the old gentle, protecting, motherly expression in her soft eyes. Then she was confined to her chair, and looked placidly on when her family gathered round her, taking nothing but a cup of tea or a little milk herself. So she grew weaker and weaker, and her husband, honest Tom Brown, became haggard as he watched her wearing away like snow in the thaw. For some time longer she was busy with her needle, and there was not a rent in a stocking or a pinafore but she mended it with patient, uncomplaining toil.

It was upon a day in October when the end came. Her children were all at work or at play in the garden and in the fields, and her husband only was with her, for he never left

her now night or day. She sat very upright, as she was wont, in her large wooden arm-chair, by the ample hearth of the inn kitchen, where she had passed her life. Some thin shawls and wraps were round her, and an old hound (she had all the noble likings and instincts of the Wyldwyls) lay dozing in a pale autumn sun-beam full of motes which fell athwart the few and smouldering ashes of the neglected fire, which had never burned so low upon an autumn day before since she kept house. Surely the rich and learned have a great advantage over untaught poverty. If Madge or Thomas Brown had ever been well schooled, she might have read, or he might have read aloud to her long after she could work no more, and so have charmed her life to linger here; or the sacred messages which Faith received from Heaven might have revealed to her the glad tidings of a world beyond the grave, and cheered the last steps of her pilgrimage thither. But she had nothing to relieve the awful tedium and solitude of a mortal sickness. No mental food from without, no conversation, no news, no comfortable words. She was alone, quite alone with God and her own thoughts, while that

great uncouth silent love of her peasant husband brooded sorrowfully over her. So the last afternoon of her life's journey stole on hour after hour uneventful, without sign or token that the Betrothed of the World* was about to claim another bride ere the night came on. The smell of the earth refreshed by recent rains, the merry chirp of birds, the far glad voices of children at play, the clash of a spade as it struck against a stone, and the wild shriek of a steam engine speeding to the haunts of trade and pleasure—all were borne from time to time into the dull room where Thomas Brown sat watching his wife with an aching heart, and that stolid, miserable foreboding of the boor who can find no voice, and looks pitifully like a dumb thing in his helpless anguish. He could do nothing, poor fellow. He was afraid even to smooth the pillow at the back of her chair with his rough, clumsy hands. He could only wait; wait without moving, almost without breathing, as time rushed onwards tearing his hopes away with it. It must have been at the turn of the day, when the light had just begun

* The Betrothed of the World is an expression used for Death in old legends.

to grow fainter and the air more chill, that she called him nearer to her and leant back in his arms and bade him kiss her, smiling calmly as she did so. Then she took both his rude hands in hers, thanked him sweetly for having been so good a husband to her, and asked him gently to be kind to her Willie; and when the poor clown fell on his knees, sobbing, a strange light passed for an instant over her face. It was but her answer to the Bridegroom's smile; or perhaps a ray of light which fell in a parting gleam from him of the Amaranthine wings, as he spread his angel plumage and bore her Home.

CHAPTER VI.

RICHMOND.

THE Duke of Courthope learned the news of Madge's death as he was giving a breakfast to a festive party at a villa which he had upon the banks of the Thames near Richmond. He was very fond of giving breakfasts; they kept his friends together, and what was better, at hand, and in sight if needed. They kept his creditors in a good humour with him. It is astonishing to see what things people who are neither hungry nor thirsty, nor poverty stricken, will do for a breakfast or a dinner. They will inconvenience themselves extremely, incur great expense for dress and equipage, offend their benefactors, clients, or customers, throw away time, health, and temper, to eat an uncomfortable meal with a stranger, when they might feast with infinite ease and appetite at home. But to breakfast or to dine with a man of influence

is quite another pair of shoes. There are people in London, and, for the matter of that, many more in the country, who would go down on all fours to be served with a scrap of cold fish and egg sauce, and a bit of boar's head, in fine company; yet there are few people in the United Kingdom who have really intelligent cooks, and some of them never give parties.

It is a great mistake for a man of rank not to give parties—almost as great a mistake as it is for a vulgar man to attempt to entertain his superiors, because the vulgar man's pretension to eat his way into society is resented, and he is certain to incur some contempt, as well as to meet with open affronts. But a man of position may really do what he likes if he will only give enough dinners or breakfasts, and invite the right people. Lord Palmerston used to say that 'dining is the life and soul of diplomacy,' and it is indeed the life and soul of our social system altogether. It costs very little to entertain discreetly. When once a man has a well mounted establishment, he must pay his servants whether they do something or nothing. His game, fruit, mutton, poultry, cost him nothing, or rather they will cost him just as much

whether he eats the shattered birds and pecked fruit—which are unfit for market—or not. His gamekeepers must be maintained, and so must his gardeners; not a shot less will be fired in his preserves, not a block of wood less will be burnt away in his conservatories, whether he has guests to enjoy his hothouse grapes and fat pheasants or not; and the serious influence which a politician may wield with his knives and forks is very valuable and may be very useful.

Let any shrewd observer only consider with attention the composition of an intelligent party like that which the Duke of Courthope had assembled round him, at his ornamental cottage by the water side, upon one of the latest fine days of an English autumn. His Grace, and every one else worth knowing, had been with the grouse among highland heather in August, and when the birds got wild they had been yachting at Cowes, and then busy in the stubble after partridges. The hunting had not fairly begun, for the scent will not lie while the sun is still powerful, and some of the late crops were still in the ground. Parliament and the law courts were closed, and it was too soon for

stumping : so there was just a week's breathing time, during which agreeable people could run up to London before the winter campaign commenced. They did not reopen their town houses ; they stopped about at snug hotels in Berkeley Square and Bond Street, or took furnished houses by the week. When they met they tried to amuse themselves and sometimes succeeded, though not always.

It was certainly with some object of profit, or advantage, that his Grace had invited Sir Joseph Demurrer, whom he had met a few days before in consultation with Mr. Mortmain, touching the amendment of an amendment of a Bill in Chancery, which was going up in a year or two before the Rolls Court. That great Equity lawyer had been hastily summoned to London in consequence of a closely-kept Cabinet secret which had unfortunately oozed out through somebody's indiscretion. It had been long known that the Lord Chancellor had lost the faculty of hearing, and had tried his cases by sight ; but it had been carefully concealed that his Lordship had for some time past lost the faculty of speech also, and the Government had hoped to tide over the session without being

obliged to introduce a new man into their confidence. The indiscreet somebody had frustrated their expectations in after-dinner oratory. Of course, however, the Chancellor would continue to hold office till arrangements could be made to appoint his successor, and might even fill his office with his usual dignity and wisdom for a term or two longer. Still, it had become advisable to entertain proposals for his retirement, and the large place-holding family which then happened to be in power were looking about to ascertain which of the distinguished lawyers below the bench were most eager for advancement—who would bid highest for the vacant Chancellorship, accept it with the least share of influence and patronage, and give the most trustworthy guarantees not to make himself troublesome to the family. It seemed probable that Sir Joseph Demurrer would do this, and it was known that both Sir Coke Littleton and Sir Gascoyne Bacon would not; because they had ideas and purposes of their own, unconnected with the family. Besides, neither of them were so popular as Sir Joseph, so that the family could well afford to snub them in his favour for their own benefit and peace of mind.

A runaway Chancellor would have been an awful infliction on the family, and Sir Joseph was an amiable, obliging person of whom everyone spoke handsomely ; he was such a worthy and excellent specimen of mediocrity. The Duke of Courthope, who had many Chancery suits, cordially approved the Government choice. and had intimated his satisfaction to Lord Dullington when they had discussed the subject just after the great St. Leger race was run at Doncaster that year. Sir Joseph Demurrer was aware that the vote and influence of the Duke of Courthope with his party had been exerted for his elevation, and against his rival Sir Gascoyne Bacon. He therefore naturally resolved that he would not be ungrateful to a magnate whose friendship conferred so much honour upon him, and who was never likely to stand in his way. He had been delighted to receive an invitation to breakfast, and the Duke was delighted to see him.

Philip Poynings, the shrewd Parliamentary agent and wire puller of the Dullington party, was there too. The Duke of Courthope did not himself care for place, and as he expressed it his Grace was 'out of the running altogether.'

But he liked to know what was going on and to watch the moves upon the political chess board with an interest half amused, half cynical. Now Poynings always knew what was going to happen next week; and the true story of the latest job or scandal, if he chose to tell it; which was indeed not often. But he could not be expected to keep a secret from a Dullington Duke. It would not be honourable, and the Duke's head-keeper sent him a haunch of venison every Christmas from Beaumanoir. If his Grace had ordered a jack snipe to be sent to him from the uttermost parts of the earth, he would have felt personally flattered by the attention, and the Duke used his vanity without scruple. His Grace was always wanting some piece of patronage for a dependent, and had asked for everything, from the primacy to a tide waitership, since his party had been in power. But he could not well ask himself, for none of his own private friends in the Cabinet dared wag a tongue in their own departments. When he wanted a place for somebody who could not be coaxed or silenced without one, and whom it was not expedient to defy, he spoke to P. Poynings, and P. Poynings spoke to the

Secretary of the Treasury, or to a clerk at the Admiralty, or an agent at the Foreign Office, or to the real man who had the place to give away, and made terms with him. Sometimes the Secretary of the Treasury stipulated for the Duke's influence in a borough which belonged to him, the Reform Bill notwithstanding, because every house in it was upon his property, and his tenants had leases drawn up by a Parliamentary solicitor, which leases were afterwards copied by an Irish peer, with perceptible results. Sometimes the Admiralty clerk or Foreign Office agent bargained for an invitation to Beaumanoir once a year, with a fixed annual commission or per centage upon the salary of the place. His Grace had also given his proxy to Earl Placard, after the custom of the period, so that whether he was absent or present, his vote in the House of Lords was steadily recorded in favour of Ministers. He had therefore in a manner taken out his license to deal in commissions and appointments while his party were in office.

The other guests were a pair of able editors who praised and printed their way into big houses, where they were used and hated; a

raffish Irish baron, who had succeeded to the till of a country banker, which banker had bought his coronet from an impecunious Minister. He was welcome, for he submitted to be a dupe because he was a snob. He was trying to buy his way into good company, and played high and betted high while doing so. There was a spare, keen-eyed man from Australia, with a black satin waistcoat and a beard growing out of the top of his chin. He was giving immense prices for brood mares and salmon roe, and dreamed of squatters and Crown lands. Then there were, for pleasure's sake, a few guardsmen, Parliamentary colonels, and stray dandies who make the padding of agreeable society ; with charming Lady Overlaw, the Hon. Mrs. Manning, the Countess of Trimmington, and other beautiful women who lived on the frontiers of propriety, but had never passed over the border. The party had both salt and savour in it. The Parliamentary colonels and ladies were pleased to meet the future Chancellor, and he, Demurrer, and the vulgar baron were glad to meet them.

‘When you get on to the woolsack you

must abolish wigs, Sir John," said Lady Overlaw to the lawyer.

'Abolish wigs!' echoed Sir John, smiling incredulously over his partridge.

'He thinks you mean Wigs with an *h*,' said Lady Trimmington.

'Oh no, I meant nothing personal—only the horse-hair wigs, Sir John.'

'Wigs lend much to the dignity of the human face,' put in the Duke with his pompous falsetto, not suspecting as usual that there was a joke afoot.

'They were great social equalizers,' observed P. Poynings. 'When everybody wore a wig, men past fifty were not handicapped as they are now with respect to ladies.'

'Do you think our grandmothers couldn't tell a man's age through his horse-hair?' asked Lady Overlaw, halving a peach with a young guardsman.

'I doubt it,' replied P. Poynings. 'The Duke of Richelieu married for the third time when he was past eighty. His bride was sixty years younger than himself. He would never have ventured upon such an exhibition if he had been obliged to figure at the altar in one

of our modern black coats and with a bald head.'

The breakfast was over. Some of the guests were preparing to row back to London, some to drive back in drags and barouches, some to return by rail or to ride over and visit the Orleans Princes at Twickenham while they were in the neighbourhood. The Duke of Courthope meant to have a quiet club dinner, because Lady Overlaw had offered him a place in her box at the Haymarket, and he had just ordered his phaeton when a telegram was put into his hand. Her ladyship was taking leave of him before she stepped into her britzka, and therefore his Grace, who had a delicate sense of the becoming, laid the telegram aside unopened.

'Were you pleased with your breakfast?' asked the Duke of his cousin, in a business-like sort of way.

'Were *they* pleased, you mean?' answered her Ladyship, shrugging her fair shoulders. 'I am always pleased: you know that. Why should they not be pleased, I should like to know? They had plenty to eat and drink.'

'Two pounds six shillings and fourpence,' observed the Duke, sententiously. 'Everything

but the cold roast beef came from Beaumanoir yesterday ; and I have included the carriage of the things and the portorage in the price of the breakfast. It is under three shillings a head.'

'Quite enough too,' laughed Lady Overlaw, decidedly. 'It is no use spending money on people. They never pay it back again, and they are glad enough to come and be looked at. Good-bye, and mind you are not late to-night. I dislike sitting in my box with nobody but my sister Jane. Bring the Australian Savage with you. Jane wants to weed her husband's stables, and anything with a good name in the stud book will do for Australia.'

'I will obey orders,' replied the Duke ; 'I can send a note from you by the club messenger to the man from Australia at his hotel. I had better not ask him myself, or he would expect dinner : those aborigines have wild notions of hospitality, and we don't dine strangers at the Carlton.'

'I will send my footman to you with a note from the Clarendon, where Jane is staying with the Strogonoffs,' answered Lady Overlaw. 'I have no coronetted paper with me at Thomas's, but she always has some, and it is better to

write to savages in state.' So saying, her Ladyship tripped into her carriage and rolled away with the best flowers in bloom in the villa gardens and hothouses that day made up into nosegays, so that the Duke's gardener had nothing to sell for twenty-four hours, and he wished that her Ladyship had been in Palestine, for she did not give him a sixpence.

'You will take care to have the unbruised peaches that were left at breakfast, with the Windsor pears, and all the pheasants that are not knocked about, packed in separate baskets and addressed as I told you, Giovanni,' observed the Duke, who sold the finest of his fruit and game like other noblemen now-a-days. Then he sauntered to the table where he had laid the telegram and carelessly opened it. He opened it carelessly because nothing that could possibly happen in the world would much disturb him, and he read:—

'The dark horse is dead. Interview requested.—SHARPE.'

He knew that the 'dark horse' meant Madge, and mounting his phaeton in high good humour he took the well-rounded brown reins in his hands and drove to London, send-

ing up an answer to the Yorkshire attorney's telegram by the way—so numerous are the conveniences of modern life—and when he pulled up an hour afterwards in Pall Mall, there was Mr. Sharpe waiting for him hat in hand in the doorway of the Carlton.

CHAPTER VII

NOBLE AND IGNOBLE.

‘WELL, we shall hear no more nonsense about those people at Wakefield—is not that the name of the place?’ said the Duke of Courthope, apparently much refreshed, as he entered one of the underground rooms of the Tory club with Mr. Sharpe behind him.

‘I should not go quite so far as that, your Grace,’ replied the lawyer, ‘but we have got rid of the worst part of our botheration, broken the neck of the difficulty without laying a finger on it, which is always a convenient mode of settlement because there are no afterclaps.’

‘It does not much matter how you get the right side of a fence if you don’t tumble down as you clear it,’ said the Duke.

‘I’m not so sure we are quite clear of the brambles yet, Duke,’ observed Mr. Sharpe, putting his hand to his hat deferentially in a horse-

dealing way he had. 'There's an okkerd old fellow named Brown, who still prints an advertisement in the papers now and then, and he might make himself troublesome if he happened to live in London instead of Calcutta, and had a wicked chap behind him.'

'What d'ye mean, Sharpe?' asked the Duke. 'If the dark horse is dead, what have we to do with any one else? Lord George Wyldwyl is the next heir in tail, and you know from Mortmain that we are on the best of terms. Nobody else would have any interest in disturbing my possession of the estates even if they had the power to do so, which I utterly deny.'

'Steady she goes, your Grace, if *you* please,' objected Mr. Sharpe. 'There are quite a litter of young Browns, and the lad who has gone out soldiering to India would be Earl of Winguid if his mother's claim were established; only fortunately he does not know it. Besides, the claim is now three generations old; and although the sixty years of undisturbed possession necessary to establish a valid title in law has not elapsed, it would be very uphill work to attack us. Nevertheless, it might be done,

your Grace ; it really might be done now by a resolute man with money ; and this Brown of Calcutta has money, there is no doubt of that.'

'What do you advise ?' inquired the Duke, briefly. He was fond of hearing what other people had to say before he spoke himself, for he was by no means an original minded man.

'Let me see,' replied Mr. Sharpe, reflectively. 'Brown of Calcutta is, as I have said, an okkerd customer, your Grace ; but Brown of Wakefield isn't : we had better get rid of him. He might, I don't say he will, but he might fall into queer street some day now his wife is dead, and if his name were to get into the cussed noosepapers, that Brown out in Calcutta would see it, and might turn up in a troublesome shape.'

'I told you my opinion long since,' said his Grace. 'Why didn't you send the whole lot of them off to some out-of-the-way place by hook or by crook ?'

'It wasn't quite so easy while the woman lived,' mused Mr. Sharpe. 'I often used to drop in at the "Chequers" for a glass of ale, just to see if I could make anything of her ; but you'll hardly believe it, your Grace, she

turned me round her finger she did, and was a good deal harder to draw than a badger. I used to tell her that I knew of a good offer for the tumble-down old house they lived in ; and she told me I must speak to her Master about that ; when I did speak to him, he said I must go to "his Missus." Once I tried to tell them a fine story of the gold fields, and brought them a coloured picture from an illustrated paper about the wonders of California ; but Mrs. Brown knew in a minute I was up to something, and I could never get her into talk after that. She distrusted herself, and she distrusted me still more, so that there was nothing to be made of her. Her husband, too, is a north-countryman, and much shrewder than he looks. He contrived in a roundabout way of his own to put it into my head that he had taken my measure, and I gave him up as a bad job.'

'It is a very strange thing,' remarked the Duke in his grand, haughty way, 'that the moment any insignificant person is opposed to me he becomes possessed of unsuspected qualities of resistance, and starts up into a separate power. Once I drove over an old apple-woman

when I was coming home sprung from the Derby, and she roused three Whig Secretaries of State and twelve judges before I got the better of her.'

'Very likely, your Grace. It costs a good deal to have your own way if you are stubborn about it and the wind is contrary; but I think I can manage this move for you, if I have time. Slow and softly wins the game, your Grace,' remarked Mr. Sharpe.

'I do not see why I should possibly be pestered some day by people who live at Wakefield-in-the-Marsh,' said the Duke. And, to do his Grace no more than justice, he really did not see why he should be inconvenienced at any time, or by anybody.

'I suppose your Grace will pay something for their outfit, if we have them gammoned off to the other side of the water?' inquired Mr. Sharpe.

'Certainly *not*,' replied the Duke, decidedly. His Grace, in common with most great spend-thrifts, had the profoundest disinclination to part with money upon some occasions. 'There are the Emigration Commissioners, Sharpe. You can bleed them, can't you? All you will

have to do is to give these Browns a good character.' The Duke, after all, was ten times cleverer than the Yorkshire attorney; or perhaps it would be truer to say that the patrician was accustomed to do everything by influence, and the plebeian had always been obliged to have recourse to money.

'To be sure,' said Mr. Sharpe, 'I never thought of that, now; and I can get them a bit of land out there, I dessay, through your Grace's good word. Live and let live.' The money-lender was not an unkind man. He would have wrung an elephant's neck, of course, for one of his tusks; but he would not willingly have harmed a fly unless something was to be got by it, and all his instincts, like those of most men who deal in horses, were merciful.

The Duke of Courthope smiled inwardly. He had been all his life so habituated to be considered by others, and to see their interests and feelings give way to his, that his heart was as hard as adamant. He felt, also, that the crafty and successful usurer was a mere child to him in knowledge of the world and diplomatic astuteness. If the Duke of Courthope

meant to crush a man, he had no regard for small delicacies. He put his ducal heel resolutely on the man's neck and stamped him out, without exultation and without pity. The thing had to be done, and he did it—thoroughly. He did not half do it.

‘Tread upon a worm and it turns,’ said a baffled and smarting antagonist to his Grace once upon a time.

‘Ah,’ answered the Duke with easy scorn, ‘I have heard your proverb, but you have only repeated half of it: “tread upon it *again*, and, it turns no more.”’

The Duke of Courthope in his youth had ruined that baffled antagonist in more ways than one, so his Grace knocked the fellow down when he was impudent enough to remonstrate. Animated by a similar spirit upon the present occasion, he replied to the benevolent suggestion of Mr. Sharpe in the very driest manner, and with a peculiar metallic ring in his voice:

‘Take my word for it, your wise course is to leave those Browns to shift for themselves, and get them no grants of lands or anything else. Never raise up an opponent; if he is in

the mud, so much the better. Were the Browns ever to see themselves in a snug farm, they would be asking how they got there, and perhaps find out. There is no such thing as a secret.'

'I can't say I fancy the job altogether, your Grace,' remarked Mr. Sharpe, 'but I would go a long way to oblige you; and, besides, it would hardly soot my own book to see them there Browns git their eds above water—that it wouldn't.' The Yorkshireman often dropped his h's and spoke in a strong provincial dialect when perplexed.

'*I should say,*' suggested the Duke, good-humouredly, as if he was conferring a favour on his visitor, 'do not move at all in the business yourself; keep out of sight. Isn't there a parson down there who belongs to old Porteous?—a washed-out man, with his head in the clouds. Lady Dowdeswell-Mowledy spoke to me about him the other day only, and said he was some connection of hers. She wanted me to give him one of my livings; to be sure women are impudent enough for anything." The Duke tossed his head, and smiled at the recollection of Lady Dowdeswell-Mowledy's

impertinence in supposing that he, the Duke of Courthope, could or would give away a good Church benefice to a good churchman.

‘I declare your Grace knows everything,’ cried Mr. Sharpe in some astonishment. ‘There is a parson—the Reverend Something Mowledy—who lives down there, and he has always taken an interest in the Browns.’

‘I know he has,’ assented the Duke. ‘Old Porteous told me he was sweet upon the girl—Madge was her name—I remember now—before she married, and he moved heaven and earth to get her out of the police row, breaking his way even into your friend Johnny Bodger about it, and wanted to have Krorl, the magistrate, dismissed for something he said or did. A regular tartar of a parson!’ added the Duke with a sneer. ‘By the way, you didn’t make the most of the police business, Sharpe. You should have squeezed Mrs. Brown when she was caught in that trap, and left the reverend gentleman to his remedy afterwards. He would not have made much of his grievance at the Mundane Office if Alfred Wyldwyl had stood in his way.’

‘I see my way a bit clearer now than I did

then,' said Mr. Sharpe, rather abashed. He had never quite taken the measure of the Duke's mind before, and now he felt for the first time that if the business between them should ever come to a wrangle, he would not be so certain to get the best end of it as he had supposed.

'Ah, you see it now,' observed his Grace. 'I have often noticed that my best thoughts are only a month or two ahead of those of my solicitors, and they generally come round to them after they have had time enough to reflect. I'll tell you what it is now, Sharpe; your plan should be to work the oracle through the parson. Don't do it yourself; set old Porteous on him. This is the way to do it. The Doctor always catches fire at the touch of print, and I have told the Clerk of the House of Lords to send him my Parliamentary papers. He is a mellow old boy, and they amuse him. He fancies they give him importance in the eyes of that ter-magant housekeeper of his; and he has done several things for me lately—showing a proper feeling. I will take care he receives the latest report of the Emigration Commissioners this evening; and if you get a letter written to him by some one at Dronington, asking his assist-


ance for the Brown family, there is no fear but he will put this and that together, and never rest till he and his Curate have shipped them comfortably off, without either you or I having had so much as a little finger in the pie.'

Mr. Sharpe took leave of the Duke of Courthope after this conversation with a much higher opinion of his Grace's intelligence, and a wholesome fear of provoking him beyond a certain point, which simplified their future intercourse. Nothing is so common a sentiment in the breast of a vulgar man as a secret contempt for the intelligence of his superiors, and if ever circumstances combine to assure him that he is under some misapprehension on this subject, he is as unaffectedly astonished as if a statue reputed inanimate had abruptly cuffed his ears.

CHAPTER VIII.

EMIGRANTS.

It may be frequently observed that the death or removal of one member of a family brings ruin upon all the rest. Some quiet, unobtrusive influence kept them together, and working in harmony ; when it is gone the connecting link between them is destroyed. The 'Chequers' was never the same after Madge was taken from it. Until the very day of her decease it had seemed a respectable road-side inn, as it had done any time since its ancient sign-board was first put up. But from that time an air of desolation and decay fell upon it. Tom Brown slouched about with his hands in his pockets, or sat upon stiles and leaned against posts with his clodhopper's boots half unlaced, and his beard unshorn. He had nothing to do, and had no heart to seek for work. If he went to dig a bit in his garden, his strength failed him,



and he might be seen soon afterwards brooding upon his wheelbarrow, with a pipe in his mouth at noon-day. His children, uncombed and unwashed, went whooping and straggling all over the village, and out into the fields, and got flogged for scaring colts, and milking cows, and stealing apples. Their mother's death had converted them into little vagabonds. Their dinner, which had been such a decent and orderly meal, was turned into a saturnalia. The children crowded round the saucepan, where a heap of unwashed potatoes boiled, and picked them out with their fingers before they were done, and they fought and yelled among each other as they did so. They climbed up to the rafters where the side of bacon hung, and helped themselves, spoiling more than they ate, and making themselves half sick. Then they set off, shouting, for the mill-stream, to catch sticklebacks, emptying the hen-roost of its eggs by the way, and did not turn up again till nightfall. There was nobody to put them to bed, so they laid down to sleep as they were, undressed, and got up again, unwashed, and became shocking dirty little children. Mrs. Jinks came in to them once or twice and scolded

them, and slapped the youngest; but they were too strong for her now, and laughed at the old grandame who had seen most of them born.

It was almost touching to see Tom Brown upon his knees in the chill autumn mornings, trying to blow up a bit of fire to boil the kettle and make himself a cup of tea. It was not long before he ceased to do so, and went over the way for a mug of warm ale and a hunk of bread and cheese, which well-nigh choked him; for his old chum and rival, Harry Jinks, had set up a Tom and Jerry shop since Madge's death, and all the village saw that the 'Chequers' had gone wrong.

One night as Mr. Mowledy returned through the glebe meadows from visiting a sick parishioner, he stumbled over something in his path, being more near-sighted than ever now, and stooping down he was grieved to perceive that the lifeless log was well-behaved Thomas Brown, apparently drunk and insensible. It was not that he had drank much; but the beer at the Tom and Jerry shop was not so good as his own had been; some said it was adulterated, and often made the villagers ill; moreover,

he was weak from living on bad food and sorrowing.

So ultimately things happened at Wakefield-in-the-Marsh very much as the Duke of Courthope had anticipated that they would happen.

Mr. Mowledy, the best friend and staunchest protector of the Brown family, fearing they would come to no good in that state of life to which they had fallen, was made the unconscious instrument of getting them out of the country, lest by any accident they should be discovered by a relative who was seeking for them, and have fortune thrust upon them. He did them no harm, for riches and titles have nothing to do with human happiness, and to have called a dozen loutish country lads and wenches who were too old to be sent to school the Honourable John and the Honourable Giles, the Lady Susan and the Lady Jemima, would have profited them nothing in the end, and have been very offensive to rational people. Still, Mr. Mowledy would not have stood in their way and perhaps deprived them of lands and a peerage, if he had known what he was doing and had had a free choice submitted to him. On the contrary, he would have felt it his duty to do them a

great injury by helping them into a position for which no one knew better than himself that they were totally unfit. Providence, which always acts for the best, and shames all human wisdom, decreed otherwise. When Tom Brown moped about day after day and let his business go to the dogs, so that Harry Jinks opened an opposition beer-shop over the way, the Curate spoke to him seriously, and mentioned the benefits of emigration; which had opportunely been brought to his notice by his Rector, Dr. Porteous. At first honest Thomas hearkened without understanding what was said to him.

But his brewers, finding their account unpaid, and their old customer doing no butts a week, sent a broker over from Dronington, and sold off his goods. They were only a few poor sticks when they came to be put up for auction; but Thomas Brown had been proud of them in his silent way, and could never face his neighbours with his head up after this disgrace had come upon him. So he listened with more attention to the Curate's talk about another country, where land was cheap and victuals plentiful, and spoke to his eldest daughter, who was growing up a bold, slatternly, motherless

girl, and to his slouching, lazy sons, about it. It chanced too that an emigration agent happened to pass through Wakefield-in-the-Marsh at this time, and got likewise talking to his boys and girls till they were all agog to be off. He was a smart, glib-tongued fellow, and he promised to go with them.

So within three months after Madge's death Mr. Mowledy accompanied her husband and children one day to Gravesend, and saw them on board the good ship *Royal Oak*. The Curate had contrived to fit them out with all things needful. Their copyhold property had realised nearly a hundred pounds after both brewer and distiller had been paid; and as hope revived in them, their self-respect seemed to revive also. They looked clean and decent again in their country-made clothes; and some scraps of mourning which they still wore for the departed wife and mother gave a pathetic interest to their appearance as the emigrants trudged through the streets of London on their way from one railway station to another, with the parson of their parish guiding them.

They were received on board the emigrant ship at Gravesend by a trim, clean-shaven man.

who looked like a horse-dealer, but who was a dealer in men. He numbered them carefully with a neat gold pencil-case in his hand, for he received a commission of so much a head on them from the government of the colony whither they were about to proceed. He was a smooth-tongued gentleman, very pleasant; and the emigration agent who had been to Wakefield and had used so many persuasive arts to lure them from their home was merely one of his young men, who was persuasive in the way of business for two pounds a week. His master, however, being better paid, was, if possible, a still more persuasive person. He assured Thomas Brown and his family that Australia was the true Tommy Tiddler's ground, and that lands and cattle were to be had for the asking. Then he told them how fine a ship was the *Royal Oak*, in which they were to sail and steam by turns across the world—how it was the latest experiment in ship-building, approved by the Post-Office, and especially built for speedy and prosperous voyages, because it would not need to stop for coaling purposes, being a screw clipper, which was rated A 1 upon the books

of Lloyd's. The emigration agent said briskly that the one hope and desire of his life was to make a voyage to the Antipodes in the *Royal Oak*; and then, having carefully noted their names and ages, to prevent mistakes, he went to dine at the London Tavern with the Honourable Company of Fishcatchers.

Thomas Brown and his family scratched their heads when he was gone, and felt a little strange in the overladen vessel, as she crawled down the Thames in the wake of a tug. But there were so many hopes on board, so much life and energy, such big projects, and great expectations, that soon they fell to cheering whenever they passed a ship going up stream, sending noisy good-byes behind them. And sometimes a young collier or bargeman bringing up coals from the northern ports, or the captain of a smack in the coasting trade, would answer their cheer and look wistfully after them, as he bade them God speed through all the dangers of the seas to the other side of the world. Hundreds and thousands of coast-folk, as they saw the ship stand out farther and farther from the shore, longed to go with her, away from hard landlords, stern tax-gatherers, and meagre

food ; and the emigrants felt proud and satisfied with themselves for that they had made so bold and wise a venture.

How they might have fared in their new home, what strong men and fair women might have sprung from their loins, what new nobilities and empires they might have founded, is a secret which will never be revealed. For yet a few days later, and a thrill of horror went through the very heart of England, as the news flew from mouth to ear that the famous screw clipper *Royal Oak*, the most successful experiment in modern shipbuilding, and which carried in it so fair a dream of fortune, had gone down off the Anglesea coast, with all hands on board.

So perished the family of the Browns of Wakefield, all save one—there being, as far as mortal judgment could discern, no reason why they should have been born, or why they should have died. The very house where they had lived their uneventful lives, and which had been known for two centuries upon one of the ancient high roads of the kingdom as the ‘Chequers’ inn, was pulled down to make way for some saw-mills, which the black-

smith's son erected to cut sleepers by contract for the Dronington Railway. After a year or two more all recollection of Madge and her immediate kindred, and the very name of the house wherein they dwelt, passed away from their birth-place, and it knew them no more.

CHAPTER IX.

A MARQUIS.

‘WHAT is a marquis?’ asked William Brown of a comrade as they leaned over the ship’s side, fishing, off Malta, where the *Tanjore* had stopped to take in more coal and deliver her mail bags.

‘How should I know?’ answered William Brown’s comrade, a Kentish hop picker; and then he added, ‘a marquis is a lord, isn’t he?’

‘Hoot, man! a marquis is a title of dignity in England, France, and Italy, next in rank to that of a duke,’ replied a decided voice with a strong Scotch accent. It belonged to a passenger bound for Calcutta, and who seemed to be upon very good terms with the deputy-sub-assistant Commissary-General of her Majesty’s troops, also on board the *Tanjore*.

William Brown was a well-mannered lad,

and had been taught by Mr. Mowledy to show habitual deference towards his seniors ; so he made way for the Scottish gentleman, who seemed disposed to continue the conversation. Therefore, after eyeing the two soldiers with a benevolent glance, he allowed himself to be carried away by the national longing of his countrymen to impart knowledge in its dryest details.

‘If ye would wish to have the requisite information about marquises, ye’ll not have far to seek it,’ said he. ‘The title of marquis is a ridiculous thing we got from the Germans, and might as well have left it to them. The military chieftains in the Teutonic kingdoms and empires which arose on the fall of the Western Empire of Rome, and were entrusted with the defence of the frontiers, were called Mark-grafen, or in the Latin tongue Marchiones. Carolus Magnus, who is improperly named Charlemagne, appointed some of the first of them, though they had already got a footing upon other people’s grounds before him. They were intended to be military governors, but they took their places into their own hands and made themselves hereditary under weak bodies

of kings. The first English marquis was created by that poor creature Richard II. in 1387. He was named Marquis of Dublin. The next creation was John de Beaufort, Earl of Somerset, but he refused to bear the dignity because it was a strange and novel one. The first marquises had the power o' life an' death. They were just petty princes: the latest marquises are commonly little better than tailors' touts.'

The two soldiers gaped at the Scotsman who thus expounded much to his own satisfaction the historical origin and present value of the second hereditary honour of the British peerage; but they did not derive much advantage from his discourse. Their captain, Lord Kinsgear (for they were both in the same troop), certainly did not answer either of the descriptions of a marquis which had been given them. He was very good-natured, but he could not have put either of them to death if he would, and as for tailors—General Violet certainly had more to do with them than this marquis.

The Scotsman perceived their dilemma, and having nothing better to do, he sat down upon

a coil of rope, and taught them ; rather to relieve his own mind of its abundance than from any thought of whether his teaching might be of use to them.

‘Hereditary titles,’ said he with a strength and breadth of accent to which no vowels or consonants can do perfect justice, ‘have died out everywhere but in England. In France they are not used at all, and a Duke is called Monsieur, which is merely the French for Mister.’ The terms your Grace and your Lordship are only heard of in the mouths of the English ; and we have taken all meaning from them, so that they will soon come to be laughed at. By-and-by we shall only use those titular distinctions which have still a meaning, such as Doctor, Colonel, Captain, or Bishop. If the time ever comes when we make captains out of bankers, call a man a doctor because his grandfather turned his money in physic, and so on, we shall omit these titles too. Already, I’m told, ’tis offensive to use sham titles between friends, and peers are only my lorded by their servants.’

‘Men!’ said the Marquis of Kinsgear, coming down from the quarter-deck and kindly address-

ing the two soldiers, 'have you had any sport?'

'Yes, my Lord, we are pulling them up almost as fast as we can bait our hooks,' replied Young Brown, answering his Captain's question, and giving him his hereditary designation as a matter of course. He even paused respectfully in his occupation till the nobleman had passed on.

'Aw!' observed the Scotch gentleman, shaking his head at the trooper when he returned to his fishing again, 'it is a pity any man should be born with the right to make other men tell falsehoods to him every time they open their mouths. There is no Lord but One.'

Whether it was that this full private soldier had the nameless power of attracting the good will of all who were brought in contact with him, or whether people on board ship are often at a loss for something to do, it is certain that the Scotch gentleman appeared to take an unusual fancy to William Brown. He was a hale, strong man, long past middle life, with a bold, open countenance, and shaggy hair. The expression of his face conveyed the idea of mingled shrewdness and honesty, with something of the

pedant and more of the humourist. Perhaps he liked William Brown because he was a good listener, decorous, attentive, intelligent. Perhaps he was insensibly drawn to him because they were namesakes, he by a curious coincidence—such strange things will happen—having been also christened William, and his patronymic being Brown.

The trooper, too, had plenty of time at his disposal. He had learned his drill, and got a good character at the *depôt* in England. So Colonel Oakes had relieved him from regimental duty, and he had been selected as servant by Lord Kinsgear, who never wanted to be served.

The Marquis had also a great liking to him ; and sometimes when they were together they might have been taken for two brothers, only that Young Brown was the stronger, the more stoutly built, and the more upright of the two. Lord Kinsgear himself had been struck by his servant's resemblance to a family picture at Beaumanoir, and even the tone of William Brown's voice often sounded to him strangely familiar. They seemed drawn towards each other by some subtle sympathy. The Marquis, who was himself a draughtsman of no

mean skill, soon found out that his servant could draw, and asked him to make certain plans and sketches for him. His Lordship liked to talk with his servant over the details of these drawings better than to listen while Lieutenant Highlowes explained to him that his real name was Wyldwyl, his (Highlowes') grandmother (by his *father's* side, which made the strength of his case) having married Sir Lovelace Wyvil, a descendant of the Ducal House of Wyldwyl, who had apparently determined to spell his name upon phonetic principles, or had been unacquainted with its true orthography. The rest of the officers had mostly some similar craze. One was fifteenth cousin to Lord Hanaper, another claimed the Barony of Trecorne, and loved to converse upon peerages, which had little interest for the acknowledged heir to half a score of them.

One or twice Colonel Oakes, however, rallied the Marquis on his unusual kindness towards a trooper and a servant. The English theory has always been that privates in the army and domestics belong to a different order of creation from officers and gentlemen. But William Brown conciliated even the Colonel. He never

took a liberty or presumed in any way upon the favours shown to him. He was civil, and prompt to obey orders. On the other hand, having been used to the companionship of Mr. Mowledy, his manners were free from all loutishness or embarrassment. He spoke excellent English, and his address to his superiors was marked by that candid, inoffensive freedom, that frankness and perfect absence of undercurrent in the mind which infallibly pleases brave men. He could not understand that he was a different species of being to his officers; and at length even they themselves began to entertain doubts upon the subject. Not but what they tried his temper, and tried it very sharply, before they gave him their confidence. Lieutenant Highlowes ordered him under arrest; Cornet Peebody damned him; and even Colonel Oakes blew him up sky high, owing to a mistake which that gallant and kind-hearted officer had himself made. But Young Brown never complained. He took his punishment like a gentleman and did not sulk after it. So Lieutenant Highlowes told him afterwards that his arrest was a fluke, and Cornet Peebody looked sheepish when General Violet, who seldom spoke louder than a whisper,

heard he had used bad language. While as for Colonel Oakes, he told Lord Kingsgear he was very sorry he had jawed Young Brown, who had not been in fault, instead of breaking the head of private Sloper, who was. 'But,' added the Colonel, heartily, 'the young beggar is a trump, and did not turn rusty, so I shall make him a lance corporal as soon as can be.'

The young fellow, too, was equally popular with his comrades because he did not stand aloof from them, took rough jokes without snarling, and shared any good thing he got with them. If the Colonel or Lord Kingsgear gave him a bottle of wine, or the remains of a ham, or a preserved pie, he was off at once to the fore-castle with it, and cut it up with his clasp knife, giving a hunk and a drink to whomsoever was nearest, till it was gone. He was always ready to fight any of them, or to write or read a letter for them, or to play leap-frog, and 'tuck in his twopenny' on deck of an evening with the rest.

They were a queer lot; many of them among the most consummate scoundrels in the world. Owing to our valiant prejudices against conscription and against general com-

pulsory service, and owing also to the decay of everything like patriotism or a thirst for military glory consequent upon the dissemination of cheap literature among the lower classes, the difficulty of recruiting the army had already begun to be felt. In no calling did men earn so little at the cost of so much humiliation, and therefore no youngster of energy and character ever dreamed of joining the ranks except under the influence of drink or despair. Our regiments had become, what they were for many years, and still perhaps are, the habitual refuge of the worst kind of criminals. While newspapers were filled with the advertisements of the police offering rewards for the apprehension of forgers, thieves, swindlers, murderers and others, these persons had discovered that the Queen's uniform was the safest hiding-place in the world for a fugitive who had offended the laws. When tracked by the police he had only to run for the nearest recruiting office to baffle his pursuers. No questions were asked of him. He needed only to crop his hair in military style, put on a red coat to disguise himself effectively, and then to lead an exemplary life in barracks or on board a transport till the

hue and cry after him had gone by. Then he might safely slip out of his uniform and go in again for any course of misbehaviour he liked best. The military authorities folded their hands and twiddled their thumbs. They called the deserters 'runners,' and thought no more of them. The Government stores were merely minus a uniform; and whatever the deserter thought proper to steal from his comrades in order to give himself a fresh start in life after he had deserted. The military authorities did not think him worth looking after. His name was simply inserted in the police sheet, and if he was unluckily caught they dealt with him as leniently as possible. He very seldom was caught: neither the Horse Guards nor the War Office wished to catch him; for they did not know what to do with him. If brought back to the regiment, he only stayed long enough to corrupt better men, and then took himself off with more spoil. So any fine enterprising fellow with a taste for other people's lives or property, who fancied the criminal business in preference to any laborious undertaking, might drive a pleasant trade if he would only take the reasonable

precaution of enlisting now and then in a new regiment, and passing a little of his spare time in heroic society, whenever he might be in danger of being molested by a magistrate. In short, the military profession was adopted by a large class of ingenious and dangerous persons, simply in order to defeat the ends of justice.

Among William Brown's comrades were roguish bank clerks, and defaulters of all kinds; expert swindlers, passers of sham cheques, hotel sneaks, and other good-for-nothing fellows. There were also a few country lads like himself, who had wandered away into the army with a sore heart for a sweet face.

The lad might not have got on so well with his companions but that he had an uncommonly hard fist, a ready wit, a sharp tongue, and an excellent temper. Besides, he had not leisure or inclination to get very thick with any of them. He joined none of their boozing parties with rum and dice between decks of nights; he had no cronies. What with his master's plans and drawings, old Mr. Brown's long-winded discourses upon things in general, and his own concerns, he began to feel tired long before the tipsy time began with his fellow-troopers, and

rolling himself up in his hammock while they cursed or swore by turns, he usually slept soundly between supper and breakfast.

There was only one thing which surprised him in the early part of the voyage, and that was the marked antipathy shown by Mr. Brown to Lord Kinsgear. Once the old gentleman snapped his fingers indignantly as the Marquis passed, and said, 'He's just one o' the wicked Wyldwyls.'

CHAPTER X.

AT SEA.

It came out in various ways during the voyage of the *Tanjore*, that Mr. Brown was a rich and enterprising merchant, who had been for many years established in Calcutta. At the first outbreak of the Indian Mutiny he had, with characteristic caution, determined to place his property in security; and, having made enough money for his own needs, he resolved to settle in Scotland. His adventures in search of a dignified retirement, however, were of a sort unhappily too common. He had purchased a rude old granite house and some wild moorlands near Dumfries, which had once belonged, so Tradition said, to the Red Comyn, from whom he was, Tradition also said, descended. The name of this territorial acquisition was 'Scrapiecraggs,' and Mr. Brown, being like most Anglo-Indians a great stickler for ancient cus-

toms, had fondly hoped to be personally known as 'Scrappiecraggs' for the rest of his days, and to be recognised as one of the ancient hereditary lairds of the soil by his neighbours and dependants. But somehow it happened that all his neighbours who had comfortable homes were attorneys, or, as attorneys are named in Scotland, 'writers to the Signet.' When they spoke to him they addressed him as 'Mister Broon;' and when they wrote to him they directed their letters to '——Brown, Esq.' Moreover, he very soon discovered that all the happiness and comfort of provincial life in Scotland depends upon the favour and protection of the resident old lady. No sooner had he bought property and settled in the country than a bitter-tongued spinster called upon him in an antediluvian carriage, and put him through a regular genealogical examination. He passed it well, for he was a Scotchman; but having been long abroad, he got thrown out in the history of a county family, and as soon as she perceived that he was not aware of the stupendous fact that she was Miss Blinkie of Blinkie, she refused to acknowledge him as Scrappiecraggs. 'Who is the canting auld wife who

drove over from Dumfries in a boat upon wheels?' Mr. Brown had innocently asked of one of the elders of the Kirk over a dish of toddy: and the elder had told his wife, who had told her sister, who had told Miss Blinkie, who had flown to arms in wrathful indignation. Miss Blinkie was the more angry because a peerage, which she kept in abeyance, could only be revived by her speedy wedding. Thus, for a reason which should have been known and admired by all Scottish patriots, she was not disinclined to matrimony, and upon the appearance of a marriageable man of good family in her vicinity, she had considered it her most sacred duty to take possession of him without further loss of time.

'An auld wife is it?' therefore shrieked Miss Blinkie of Blinkie, greatly incensed. 'When a' Scotland kens I have the barrenness o' Blinkie to my tocher, for the heirs of my body lawfully begotten, an' me a maiden woman! I'll teach the gowk manners!'

So ever afterwards Miss Blinkie of Blinkie, whose opinions had great weight at Dumfries, asserted with persistent animosity that the last laird of Scrappiecraggs had fallen beside her

own great grandfather in the final charge which had sent 'Cope's pockpuddings fleein' before Charles Edward's hielandmen at Preston Pons.' Then, as for dependants, there were no longer any such persons. The farmers who held leases on the Scrappiecraggs estate talked politics, and their daughters played the piano. They were in favour of reform in the land laws, and considered that the obligation was very much on Mr. Brown's side whenever they paid their rent without deductions for short crops. Nobody called Mr. Brown 'Scrappiecraggs' indeed but a medical man who paid him an unexpected visit. Even he, moreover, had been sent to carry out a grim practical joke devised by the vindictive Miss Blinkie, who had suggested that 'the rich pedlar Broon might be suffering from the effects of a sunstroke he got in India, for he was obviously labouring under mental hallucinations about his own identity.'

Now all this made things extremely unpleasant; and, moreover, it always rained at Scrappiecraggs when it did not snow. Mr. Brown, who was accustomed to a more genial climate and to a considerable amount of domestic attendance, did not like to be scolded

when he got up in the cold by an hereditary old encumbrance whom he had invited to keep house for him, and who insisted upon his breakfasting invariably off an oatmeal poultice and a bare sheep's head. He was not pleased by any of those dry and humorous remarks respecting his 'eegnorance' of local affairs, with which his acquaintances delighted to beguile their leisure. Therefore one day it occurred to him that the best thing he could possibly do for his own comfort would be to run away from Scrappie-craggs, as the earth was not likely to open and swallow it up. His spirits revived at the first commercial town he reached on his way southward; and by the time he got to London he had a fine appetite for the latest Indian news in any evening paper, as he sipped an excellent glass of Madeira at a snug Anglo-Indian hotel on the borderland between the West End and the City. The result of Mr. Brown's cogitations over his wine sent him on the following day to Leadenhall Street; and for a week or two afterwards he was seen in the neighbourhood of the House of Commons and the public offices about Whitehall. Then somehow or other it happened that Mr. Brown (of the eminent firm of W. Brown,

M'Canny & Co.) returned to Calcutta with several large contracts for clothing, provisioning, and arming Her Majesty's forces.

That is how he came to be on board the *Tanjore*. He could not rest and do nothing. The man was a trader at the heart. He had none of the resources in himself which make the opportunity of leisure delightful to the poet, the philosopher, and the noble. He had no world within himself to make him indifferent to the world beyond, or scornful of it, or compassionate to it. The small echoes of gossip, little hatreds, petty envies, and pestilent moral squibs had murdered his peace in retirement. He did not care to read, he had never written anything but business letters, and he did not know how or where to seek enjoyment. It had been revealed to him that his business was the only pleasure which he was capable of appreciating, and he sensibly returned to it; not for the sake of gain, for he was childless, and had already more than he wanted, but for an occupation. He desired something to convince him that he was of some use in the world, and had his place in it.

Half amused and half angry at the old

gentleman's contempt for Lord Kinsgear, a contempt which he did not care to conceal, Young Brown looked laughingly up at him one day and said, as the spray from a stiff nor'-wester dashed over the bows of the ship,

‘You do not seem to like the nobility, sir.’

CHAPTER XI.

HEREDITARY RANK.

THE acquaintance between the frank, sympathetic young soldier and the merchant had ripened as it only could have done at sea, where people are shut up together in a small space, and see more of each other in an afternoon than they would under ordinary circumstances in twenty years. There is nothing like a sea voyage for contracting friendships or marriages.

‘Wait now till I tell you, young man,’ answered Mr. Brown, making himself up to deliver a homily. ‘There is a notable difference between nobility and hereditary nobility. Nobility when it has any true foundation is to be aye revered. But we must not omit mention of the cunning device made use of by the usurper Hugh Capet for establishing his unlawful power when he had taken the French crown from Charles of Lorraine. Here in a mere

bastard's trick you see the first origin of hereditary nobility.'

'Hugh Capet lived in 987; was Count of Paris and son of Hugh the Abbot, wasn't he, sir?' replied Young Brown, briskly, for he was pretty well up in his dates.

'Ye speak like a book, my laddie,' answered the elder man; 'and when this war is over there in India I shall be glad to converse with you as to how far it may suit your purpose to remain a private soldier, when you may do better.' Then resuming the thread of his discourse he continued, 'formerly all magistracies and honours, such as Dukedoms and Earldoms, were conferred upon select and deserving persons in the general conventions of the people, and were held only during good behaviour; whereof, as the lawyers express it, they were but beneficiaries. Hugh Capet, however, says Francis Hotoman the civilian, in order to secure to himself the affections of the great men, was the first who made these honours perpetual, which were formerly but temporary, and ordained that such as obtained them should have an hereditary right to them, and might leave them to their children. It was well enough as

long as titles and estates went together, for at all events the title meant something, but'——

Here the Scotch merchant's lecture was interrupted by one of the mules which had been shipped for the transport service at Aden, a place which has been for two thousand years the emporium of trade between Europe and the East. Suddenly the beast fell into convulsions, then turned upon its back and died.

'That makes the seventy-ninth of them dead since yesterday. The Barbary horses are dying too, yet Lord Kinsgear's horse is right and tight enough,' observed William Brown, taking the warm, comfortable nose of the English charger in his two hands and stroking it.

The Scotchman took snuff. 'Aw,' he remarked presently, shaking the dust from his fingers—'they are like Hugh Capet's nobles, they were bought dead. My friend the deputy-sub-assistant Commissary and some of his patrons are not sorry to get rid of them, to buy more. They do not spend their own goods or money any more than the French king did.'

Young Brown could not quite understand what the merchant meant at that time, but when some years afterwards he heard of the

deputy-sub-assistant Commissary-General as a very rich man, and a member of Parliament, the Scotchman's words were invested with a clearer signification.

‘The Law of Inheritance which is now in force,’ resumed Mr. Brown in a plain, business-like way, ‘by which I mean to say the transmission of hereditary rank and entailed properties, has long made a family a curse instead of a blessing to the nobility. It produces shocking and unnatural results. Whereas children should be a source of strength and prosperity, according to all Gospel law, they have been degraded into the signs of poverty, and too often of shame. Many noble gentlemen pass a considerable portion of their lives in leaving their children about in all parts of the world like so many cuckoos. The poor young things are abandoned to chance because their noble forbears cannot or will not afford to educate and bring them up at a cost of ten thousand pounds each; and they will not own a labouring man or a servant girl for a relation. If the children do well when they come out of foundling hospitals and charitable institutions, and ever show their heads in society, they are

unable to recognise their own fathers and mothers or any of their nearest kindred ; and this, while we have so many fine colonies where a dozen tall sons and daughters could earn fortunes for themselves and all connected with them ; and where children would mean wealth, happiness, and honour. Now there is many a nobleman in Britain who won't own his offspring ; and such of them may be compared to those droll birds of passage, the Zygodactyli, who have two sets of limbs, some turned before and some behind.'

'But, sir,' said Young Brown, gravely, and remembering the Curate's lessons—'the son of the bond-woman, you know?'

'Ye do not inquire properly concerning that matter!' replied the Scotchman, sternly, 'we are expressly told in the fourth chapter of Galatians and the twenty-fourth verse that these "things are an allegory?" Now, listen to me, and I'll tell ye, my lad, what is an allegory.

'An allegory is just a figurative sentence or discourse, in which the principal subject is described by another subject resembling it in

its properties and circumstances. The principal subject is thus kept out of view altogether. We are left to collect the intentions of the writer by the resemblance only of the secondary to the primary subject. "*Claudite jam rivos, pueri; sat prata biberunt,*" is an example of an allegory. It does not mean that music is water and that men's ears are fields.

'I would be loath to meddle irreverently with Scripture texts,' pursued the Scotchman with some solemnity, 'but surely the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah inherited the blessing of Israel equally with those of Rachel and Leah, and there were princes of Dan and princes of Naphtali. It was foretold that Gad should be a conqueror, and that Asher should feast upon royal dainties. Besides,' added the Scotchman in a practical manner, as if he puffed dispute disdainfully away from him, 'the world is wide enough for all of us; there is bread always to be won by honest working hands. Wealth comes to those who look after it. If any man is poor at forty it is his own fault; and if you know him you will see the reason of his indigence. It is not far to seek—he is either a fool or a rogue. A fool if he could not make such a trumpery thing

as money, a rogue if he lost, having once got it together, because that would imply dishonesty followed by retribution.' It will be generally seen that successful men make small allowance for mishap or evil fortune, and Mr. Brown of Calcutta was no exception to persons of his own class. He thought that everybody with two ideas might be as successful as he had been himself, and had a very poor opinion of them if they failed.

'It is curious enough,' observed Mr. Brown on the following day, as he took his place again on deck beside the young soldier, 'that there is no collection of bastardy laws in English law literature.' It was just after lunch, and most of the passengers on board the *Tanjore*, except such as drank no wine, slept away the noonday heats; among the latter, however, were the Scotch merchant and the youthful trooper, towards whom he felt so strong and irresistible attraction.

'The subject,' continued Mr. Brown, 'interested me so much that when I was last in England I consulted the librarian at Lincoln's Inn, who was introduced to me by Mr. Bodger, of the Mundane Office. All that the librarian

could show me, and all that I could find, were two "sections" on the subject, one in Burn's *Justice* and another in Oke's *Magisterial Report*. The English law, which is the common law and not the statute law, is so distinct on the subject that it requires no extra definition. Born a minute after the solemnization of marriage in church or before a magistrate, and the child is legitimate; born a minute before, illegitimate, which would be alone sufficient to prove the absurdity of the rule. The Civil and Canon Law, which is the Scotch law, makes the child legitimate if the parents ever marry, though it may be years after the birth of the child. The only questions even raised in "Burn" and "Oke" are in relation to proofs of bastardy, namely: "How many days after the father's death is a child illegitimate?" About three hundred days is the extreme limit fixed, but there have been nasty lawsuits on this point. Such is the brief and explicit, the cruel and nonsensical code which daily and hourly consigns unborn millions of human beings to a life of disgrace and infamy. It is a scoundrelly thing, invented by a devilish pride, and sanctioned and maintained by a not less devilish greed. It seems to close the very

gates of heaven against repentance, and to make a hell upon earth for the innocent.'

'You speak strongly, sir,' said the young soldier.

'I have cause to speak strongly,' answered the merchant. 'I am a Scotchman. Now, by the law of Scotland, marriages merely contracted by declaration, acknowledgment, or before witnesses, are held valid. But the question of the validity in one country of marriages good according to the laws of another, is one of the most complicated, and it may be added, one of the most unsettled which remains in international jurisprudence. Marriages are void if solemnized in a wrong name, and if a poor deceived lassie gives out that she is legally married, and cannot furnish the requisite proof, she may be condemned to silence and heavy costs. It is not always easy to prove a Scotch marriage after the lapse of a few years; and if it cannot be proved,' added the merchant, dejectedly, 'it might as well have never happened.'

'Save for conscience's sake, sir,' interposed the younger man.

'Ay, lad, it is a braw thing to have that

with us. If conscience will not cure a heart-ache, it will ever help us to support it—not without wincing, may be, but still with the courage which sustains us under all forms of suffering but remorse. Listen, my lad. It will be full two hours before those sluggards will awake after having slept off the fumes of the wine, ale, and stout in which they have drowned and burned their livers; so if you will fetch me my large white cotton umbrella to ward off the sun, I will tell you a story of a Scotch marriage.'

It was thus that William Brown became acquainted with a series of events which concerned him very nearly, though he heard them at the time with little interest. It was not for years afterwards that he remembered them clearly, and every word in which they were narrated was engraved in his memory. He did not learn them all at once; but the tale once begun, it pleased the merchant to complete it, and indulge the garrulity of age with a patient listener. They were still many days at sea, and after lunch there were always some quiet hours on deck. So bit by bit, fact by fact, often

seemingly confused and contradictory till he had unravelled their mystery, the young soldier learned unconsciously, as many a man has done before him, the history of his own family.

CHAPTER XII.

AULD LANG SYNE.

‘My father,’ said Mr. Brown, ‘was one of “John Company’s” servants, employed at Fort William, and he got his place through the influence of Lord Pigot, who was under some obligations to his uncle, a saddler. Though the East India Company was then a trading community, everything that was worth having in, it fell into the hands of some lord, and what the lords did not want themselves they gave away. It has always been so, and always will be, in all times and in all countries, whether they called their lords peers or citizens. Now the first establishments of the English in India arose out of the alleged necessity of providing factories or warehouses where British traders might store their goods in safety and carry on intercourse with the natives. In my father’s time those factories had already become armed strongholds and fortifications.

They were not tenanted by peaceful clerks and supercargoes, but garrisoned by armies of cyphering soldiers. So when Hyder Ali began to overrun the Carnatic, my father, like the other young commercial men of his standing, chucked away the pen from behind his ear, and joined the raw levies of Sir Eyre Coote. He might have done well, for he was a brave man, and a personal friend of Popham, the hero of Gwalior. But unfortunately he got wounded in his first skirmish with the French under Bussy, and was invalided home upon a small pension.

‘He settled on the banks of the Nith, near Dumfries, and was treated with a good deal of respect by his neighbours, not only because he had seen far and strange things, such as were only revealed to a few in those days; but also because he claimed kindred through his mother with Sir Brown-Comyn, and was known to all the country round as a personage of good birth and character. He married a Miss Hope, of the famous Hopes of Ayr, and had two children; firstly, my sister Meggie, and then my mother died in giving birth to me.

‘We lived in a very poor way, but the

respectability of people in Scotland was not then measured by their money, and we were always considered as among the most honourable folk within a day's ride of Dumfries. We owed nothing to any one. Our homespun clothes lasted a long while, and my father's pension from John Company, small as it was, sufficed to buy us kail and oatmeal. We wanted little else; and if we had, my father, who was of the old blood of the Browns, or "as it might be more precisely and accurately stated, the Brown-Comyns, of Scrappiecraggs," insisted the merchant, 'was too proud to follow any trade or calling in sight of his own kith and kindred. He spent his leisure chiefly in catching salmon, and was renowned for a particularly killing fly which he had himself devised, and which attained such a reputation that it was sold in fishing tackle shops as far as Glasgow and even in Edinburgh as the "Brown Fly." It was he who hooked the big salmon of eighty-three pounds weight, which is the largest ever taken in British waters, where they seldom exceed thirty-five pounds full grown. So as soon as the fishing season commenced, my father would receive letters from anglers in every part

of England and Scotland, soliciting his advice ; and upon more than one occasion the Government consulted him, asking his guidance especially with respect to an Act of Parliament for the regulation and encouragement of British fishers, which nearly destroyed the produce of our rivers entirely, as may be seen on reference to 25 Geo. III. c. 65, 1785. It was on account of the unfortunate results of a legislative enactment in which he had so large a share, that my father conceived some disgust for politics ; and he was also, I think, displeased because an elaborate report which he had drawn up with all the care which distinguished the writings of the East India Company's servants had been merged in the general report of a select Parliamentary committee, without any complimentary mention of his own name. He had built, I suppose, some hopes of employment under the Crown upon his report, and when they were disappointed, he was no better satisfied than people usually are when they fail to obtain what they want.

‘ It must have been somewhere about this period of his life, and now nearly fifty years ago, that a young Englishman, apparently travelling

about upon a pedestrian tour, arrived at Dumfries and put up at the Rose, which was the principal inn there. I was nearly seventeen at the time, and you may be sure I soon found him out, for a stranger in those parts was a rarity. It was he, however, who first called upon us. He came with a letter from Mr. Majoribanks, of Majoribanks, a mighty fisherman, who bespoke my father's countenance and "Brown flies" for Mr. Odo Wyvil, a young gentleman who wished to rent fishing on the Nith for that season; and in some manner or other it seemed, although the fact was not mentioned in express terms, that he desired to keep out of the way of pursuit or discovery, a circumstance which invested him with a romantic interest both for my sister and me. It was Meggie, I remember, who opened the door to him on the morning he first came to our house. She had bare feet, and her frock tucked up nearly to her knees, for it was washing day. But as soon as she had seen who it was, she morriced off to her room, put on her Sabbath stockings of grey ribbed worsted, and twisted a bit of blue ribbon in her hair; but was ashamed to show herself, and hid giggling and blushing behind the door

till he went away. He was a very handsome young fellow, tall and well grown, with black hair and large eyes. I think I never saw so handsome a man. He came very often after he had once made our acquaintance, and I had a vast admiration for him; but it was a long while before Meggie would open the door for him again. She always seemed to avoid him, and whenever he came she used to hide herself away with her foster-sister, a clanswoman of ours, though only a weaver's daughter. I have heard since that she married an English gentleman's servant, and drifted far enough away from Dumfries.

‘But I think the person who took most interest in the Englishman's society was my father. It was so long since he had enjoyed familiar intercourse with any one who could talk to him about those things which he had seen or done in his youth. Even Burns, our neighbour, of whom he had seen something in the sad decline of his life, was but an inspired peasant; whereas the affairs of India seemed as familiar to Mr. Wyvil as the affairs of our parish were to the minister. He would talk for hours with

my father about the capture of Tanjore, the alliance of the Nizam and the Mahrattas against Tippo Sahib, the administrative acts of Sir John Shore, the acquisition of Rohilcund, and the cession of Cuttack by the Rajah of Berar, all events which are now forgotten, but which were then quickening the pulses of all true-born Britons. I never noticed but one bad point in him, and that was his utter and mocking indifference for the feelings of others whom he did not know or like. He appeared to entertain an unaffected belief that all things were created either with a direct or an indirect reference to himself, and that they were bound to minister to him. He was gallant and graceful, however, even in his selfishness; and though he claimed an extravagant degree of personal attention as his due, and had the whole of our small household running about for him upon wild goose chases, he said kind things, which we all thought more than enough payment for our trouble; and he looked most pleased when he was most unreasonable.

‘He was very clever, very impassioned and eloquent where his own interests were concerned.

He was brave even to rashness, generous, head-long in pursuit of what he then called Truth and Justice because he suffered himself from ill-treatment. I remember that "Truth and Justice" were his favourite words. They were the words which occurred most frequently in his conversation, and which coloured all the rest. He was what is called in these days a philosophic radical, and I am even now convinced that had he not been connected with a titled family, and had he been obliged to rely on his own wits for distinction, he was so athirst for fame that he would have ripened into a great and good man, as soon as years and experience had mellowed his intellect into something softer and sweeter. But he was, in a manner which I did not clearly understand, connected with the Duke of Courthope, a rank old Tory, who had brought about the Emmett rebellion in Ireland by his high-handed ways. And now I come to think of it, you are as like to him yourself as two peas in one pod,' observed the merchant, pausing and looking wistfully at his young companion. 'I can find no explanation of such things, save that I sometimes fancy when I look

at you that his face haunts me, and that I must imagine a likeness where none exists.

‘We had only his own account of himself, but we had no reason to distrust it. He was poor, poorer even than we were, and he made no pretence to be rich, though there were many signs about him of those relics of wealth which are the waifs and strays, the jetsam which wrecked Fortune strews upon the sands of ruined lives. He wore a valuable repeating watch which struck the minutes and was a great rarity in those days. Upon the case of it was one of those *Petitôt* enamels of a young tambourine player dancing upon a bed of violets, which I have since been told must have been worth the fee-simple of all we possessed, and his sleeve-links, his very shirt-buttons, were of massive gold.

‘My father, who had no great reason to be pleased with the Government, and who thought he had been ill-used because he had been disappointed, listened eagerly as the hot-headed young man poured forth his passionate love of liberty in words of flame. It was possibly because my father was himself a cool-headed man, slow of thought and tongue, that he

delighted in the intellectual flights and the fiery torrents of speech which poured from the lips of his daring guest. They would sit together talking harmless treason round the pine-wood fire upon a Saturday night when sport was over, while the spoil of the stream hung to kipper in the chimney, as my father looked over his tackle and trimmed his flies for the coming week.

‘By-and-by Meggie would steal in on pretence of mending my father’s landing-nets, which he kept very white and strong, or she would bring him some cuttings of silk and wool for his famous fly. So the evenings sped on month after month ; my father and Mr. Wyvil debating the affairs of the nation, and Meg and I listening till nine or perhaps ten o’clock, when my father opened his great family Bible, and read the lessons for the evening ; after which not another word could be got out of him, and Mr. Wyvil was fain to take his departure till next day. But we could hear his musical whistle and elastic step, with his gay good-night to the watchman, long after he had disappeared in the mists of evening. My sister soon began to listen for those sounds, and after a little while,

I remember he always whistled the same tune, that of an old Jacobite song, the first she had ever sung to him, and which embalmed one of the most exquisite myths of the Stuart—"King of the Hieland Hearts, Bonnie Prince Charlie."

'We soon learned his history, or as much as he chose to tell us, and I do not think that he concealed anything, except the spelling of his name, which we found out by accident on the back of a letter was Wyldwyl, and not Wyvil, as he pronounced it. He was the son of a lord by courtesy, one of the numerous family of the "Wicked Wyldwyls," as he himself described them, with a mixture of pride and contempt that used to make me laugh and my sister sigh. He had no title himself, and was accustomed to say in his careless way—half bitter, half bantering—that he was born with the tastes of a duke and the income of a groom. I can only tell you for certain what I know of him, and that is very little, but I am under the impression that he must have been very much in debt, and that he was staying at Dumfries partly to hide away from his creditors. I do not think he was dishonest in money matters, but he was thoughtless, and what few shillings he still had he flung

away. I remember he gave his last half-guinea for a bunch of violets he might have had for a bawbee upon my sister's birthday ; and when he offered them to her with one of his courtly speeches, she turned pale enough, poor lassie, for violets are thought unlucky to girls in their teens by our old northern superstitions. He always seemed to me happier without money than with it. He would come and eat his oat-meal porridge with a little buttermilk at our house in the highest spirits, all fun and good humour ; but whenever a letter reached him containing a remittance, he would always insist on having me with him at his inn, and making us both stupid with claret. A day or two—at most a week—after he had gotten a new supply of money it was all gone again, though he was kept very short, and I doubt if he ever knew when he should see any more. Yet I do not think he had ruined himself by the ordinary extravagances of young men. He was not fond of drinking or games of chance, and when he played at games of skill he won. My father, who had learned whist and piquet, then a favourite game in India, said that Mr. Wyvil was the best player he had ever seen. His

memory was remarkably retentive, and he never made a revoke. As far as I could ascertain the cause of his embarrassments, from those scraps of his graver conversation with my father, which I picked up, as boys will, when I was not supposed to be listening, I believe he had contrived to affront the people in power, and particularly that rancorous old Duke of Courthope, who had made such a noise in Ireland. He must have held at some time or other one of those sham commissions in the Household troops, which are an excuse for idleness; and falling into a state of discontent with the authorities, he had printed a pamphlet upon army reform, and had been betrayed by his printer to some of the influential underlings of the Horse Guards, and the War Office, who had determined to punish him, and had carried out their threat. Adjutant-General Sir Ajax Bodger, K.C.B., had instituted a private inquiry, which had resulted in his being placed upon half-pay. Lord Hanaper, who had married a daughter of Sir Ajax, and was at that time commander-in-chief, had refused him a court-martial, naturally fearing that the Adjutant-General might have made some mistake, which would be thus

brought to light. Lord Trecorne at the War Office, who was Lord Hanaper's brother-in-law, and whose wife was first cousin to Sir Ajax Bodger, had been unable to see any reason for interfering with the decision of Lord Hanaper, and there had been a paper war, and a Parliamentary riot, and a newspaper scandal about his case in the usual way, till it had been rendered quite unintelligible. So we looked at Mr. Wyvil with a sincere sort of hero worship, and considered him as much of a martyr as Clive or Hastings, with whose names the very air was then resounding.

‘I recollect that upon one evening when he was with us a question unexpectedly came up as to what was to be done with me. It seemed to take us all by surprise. I was a big-boned, gawky lad, with red hair and a fine appetite, recurring regularly four times a day. I had received a solid sort of education, partly from my father, who was himself no contemptible scholar, and partly from a dominie at Dumfries, who had taught me my humanities for an occasional supply of kippered salmon. But nobody had thought what I should do for myself and Meggie when in the course of nature it must

happen that our father should be taken away from us, and he had of late shown certain signs that his constitution, impaired by wounds and unnourished by any gleams of hope or prosperity, was now fast breaking up. When he died we should be left without any resource, unable to dig and ashamed to beg. Whether it was that something which Mr. Wyvil had said suggested this doleful train of thought, or whether I had arrived at that age when the desire of adventure, the longing to go forth and do or suffer, makes itself invariably felt in all healthy youngsters, sure it is that the uncertainty of my prospects in life impressed us all very seriously, and my father's withered hand (it was the one which had been struck through by an Indian spear at Arcot) rested with a mournful pathos on my sister's head, as he owned he had been unable to set aside any provision for her. Within a week from that day I received a cadetship in the Honourable East India Company's service, and as my father had no influence with the directors, who disposed of such things, we knew such a piece of luck could only have come to us through Mr. Wyvil, though he had had the good taste not to excite our expectations till he could fulfil

them. Indeed he acknowledged, after some hesitation, that he had represented my father's unrequited services to Lord Overlaw, who was at the head of the Board of Control; "and his Lordship, who is a connection of mine, and one of the few friends I have left, has been pleased to pay attention to my request," added the young man, with a comical assumption of importance, which we were too grateful to ridicule, or even to perceive, though I thought of it with a sort of pained and shamefaced feeling afterwards; and I was, I think, honest enough to regret that I should owe my first start in life not to any merit or fitness of my own, but to the recommendation of a stranger who had seen but little of me and knew less, to another stranger who had never seen me, and did not know me at all.

'It was a long voyage then to India, and I could not afford to shorten any of it by taking the overland route through Marseilles and Egypt. The mails, therefore, which left England some time after my departure reached Calcutta before me, and the first news which I received on my arrival was contained in a black bordered sheet of paper. It was written by poor Meggie, and

announced our father's death. She was, she added, staying with her foster sister, and would remain with her till I was promoted in the usual course, and she could join me, as we had arranged together before I went away. I forwarded her some money from my first pay. It was not much, but it was all I could spare ; though I was proof to every temptation and inducement to spend a groat upon myself till she was provided for, and all the allowances of the Company at that time were liberal. Therefore, while most of my fellow cadets had three or four servants and a couple of horses about them, and pawned their future to the Parsee money-lenders as soon as they arrived at the Presidency, I managed to do with half a servant. He was an old clansman, and had followed the chief of the M'Gillies, who was in reduced circumstances. We paid him together more than either of us could have paid him alone, and we were all three satisfied : though some of the wilder youngsters cut their jokes at us, till the M'Gillie fingered his dirk and looked ugly at their jests. I cannot say myself, however, that I ever cared for them. ' Jokes break no bones,' observed the merchant, sententiously.

‘It was a long while after that before I heard from my pretty sister Meggie. She wrote to me from Naples, and her letter was signed “Margaret Wyldwyl.” She said she was in great distress and alone in Italy, and that her husband had left her. She told me a wild tale of her having been shut up in a convent, and of her having escaped and given birth to a daughter. Her letter was the outpouring of a broken heart and a head almost distraught with prolonged and hopeless misery. Her husband seemed to have got rid of her, and to have suddenly disappeared; so there she was in a foreign country, without friends or money, with an infant child.

‘I am glad at this hour to say,’ continued the Scotch merchant, wiping his forehead, ‘that I did not hesitate as to what I should do. I tossed up the commission which had been begged for me by the scoundrel who had betrayed my sister, and hurried back to England. The first person I sought there was Lord Overlaw. I had some trouble to gain speech of him, because all men of title, especially those in place, become invisible to any one who wants to punish them for a misdeed. But I felt I had been duped

and got out of the way for a purpose : so I waited near Lord Overlaw's office till I saw him come forth, and I could recognise him by the arms on his carriage. His Lordship looked at me out of the corners of his eyes, and was evidently averse to be inspected, still less interrogated ; but he must have seen I was in grim earnest, and he was not a man to screen a friend at any risk to himself. So after the first double or two he no longer attempted to shuffle with me, as I had been warned it was his habit to do, and from him I found out that Mr. Odo Wyvil was neither more nor less than the fine Duke of Courthope and Revel. The hard-hearted old peer who had harried the Irish was "deceased without issue," as the heralds say, and a collateral heir had also died to make way for him. I suppose such grand fortunes coming suddenly upon him had turned his head and made him dishonest. Few heads are strong enough to bear being lifted up very high.

'I went in hot haste down to a big house which he had at Whitehall, and bluntly charged the base Duke with having married and abandoned my poor sister, and also with concealing his new name and rank from her and me.

He tried to pacify me, and when I insisted in stern, strong words that he should at once acknowledge her as his wife, he told me he had married a woman of title a week before, and that he would do anything I pleased for my sister if I would be quiet, but that he had never wedded her. Then I told him that he lied in his throat, and I beat him—beat him till there was well-nigh murder done between us, and his servants rushed into the room where I had forced my way in to him, and parted us. I was taken up by one of the police who kept guard before his palace doors, for it was night; but no charge was ever made against me.

‘As soon as I was set at liberty I went to Italy. I could find no traces of her who was in Heaven’s sight and mine an English duchess, and who I was determined to see righted if justice could be won upon earth. I wrote to her foster sister at Dumfries, and my letter was returned through the post-office. I went there and found that she had married and settled in England, no one knew whither. All I could ascertain was that her husband had been a gentleman’s servant, who had become a tavern-keeper, as most of them do who thrive well. I found out

the "gentleman" too: he was an insolvent debtor living at Boulogne; but I traced him, and he sent me, as I now believe, upon a false scent to Ireland! I wandered about trying to find my sister; till every shilling I had was exhausted. I went to lawyers and they asked me for proofs of my statements and belief: I could give none. I composed advertisements which the newspapers refused to insert, handbills which the printers would not print. I walked on foot through half England in search of her, till in passing through a country village on the borders of Oxfordshire, I was waylaid and very roughly handled; though, strange to say, neither my watch nor anything I had about me was stolen.

' When I came to myself I was in the county hospital, where the doctors seem to have thought me crazy, for they had shaved my head, and were not at all disposed to let me go. Chance, however, if there be chance in human affairs, came to my rescue. It happened that one of the hospital directors had made acquaintance with me on my voyage out to India, and had taken some such fancy to me as may be I have to you. He was in a large way of business in the City, and had a branch house at Calcutta.

He asked me if I would go out as clerk, and he said if I did well I might perhaps become his managing man. I was glad enough to close with his offer, for I saw no chance of finding my poor sister, and I half hoped, half believed, that she was dead and her child also. I was advised to put all further search for her into the hands of a lawyer named Sharpe ; but I have never had any tidings of her, though I saw him only the day before I left London.

‘I prospered greatly in India. Before I was thirty-five years old I had made enough money to come home and leave others to do my work. I must have had nearly 40,000*l.* well secured. I had been first managing man and then partner in the old established firm of M‘Canny. The hospital director who had started me had gone the way of all flesh, and I trust I had not shown myself unmindful of the benefits I had received from him in the day of my poverty and sorrow. Well, the first thing I did when I got back to England was to find out how I could thwart or anger the Duke of Courthope, and as I learned that he was very anxious about the representation of a rotten borough of his, I determined to contest it against his Grace’s nominee. It was

just after the first Reform Bill, and his power was almost absolute; but I broke it, and humbled the pride of the Wyldwyls in their own birthplace to the dust, as they had done mine. I could not win the election, though I spent every sixpence I had made upon it. But I ruined the Duke, and so held him up to execration, so terrified and cowed him, that he never more ventured to go abroad beyond his own park gates; and he died, frightened to death. Since then I have spent my life in India, doing what I could for others and myself.'

CHAPTER XIII.

THE SEPOY REVOLT.

WHILE the good ship *Tanjore* is making her swift course to the Indies it may be worth while to consider the cause which sent an English marquis and an English peasant to fight against a people they had never seen, with the full consent and approbation of those who loved them dearest; and which had likewise induced a shrewd Scotch merchant to accompany them as long as he could do so without danger. It was indeed a cause which had placed in sudden peril the dignity and revenues of the noble, the peasant's home, the merchant's moneys, with much that Britannia still retains of her dominion over the seas.

The rebellion which burst out in British India in 1857 created as much astonishment in the House of Commons as if it had been something altogether unprecedented and wonderful.

But in fact it was neither a new nor a strange thing, and there must have been at least several peers who had seen or heard of a similar occurrence more than once before. As far back as the year 1806 there was a revolt of the Sepoys in which the family of the late Tippoo took an active part. It flamed suddenly into mischief on July 10, at a place called Vellore, which has long since slipped out of Parliamentary memory, but which was, nevertheless, a real place, situated in the south-east of India. It was strongly garrisoned by British troops, because it had been made the residence of the heirs of the dethroned Sultan of Mysore, whom we had caged up during the warm weather, worried at ease, and then gone to sleep as usual, nothing doubting. Indeed, we had not taken the trouble to garrison Vellore ourselves. We had put Sepoys to do our work for us. The word Sepoy is a corruption of Sepáhi, which is merely the Hindustanee for soldier; and very queer soldiers they were—cunning, obsequious, treacherous and venal. Moreover, they liked the family of the Sultan of Mysore, whom they were set to watch, and did not like us. We had adopted the rash practice of arming

s

and disciplining them from the French, and they had profited by our own lessons to upset us as soon as they felt they were strong enough to do so. One Colonel Gillespie, another forgotten name, was obliged to kill eight hundred of them at Vellore before they were convinced that they had acted prematurely, and were quite ready to cringe before us and to cheat us again. The next Sepoy mutiny made itself felt at Madras in 1809 ; and Lord Minto was sent out in a hurry to publish a general amnesty that the Sepoys might mutiny henceforth without fear of consequences. Lord Minto was selected to govern India at a critical period because he had been to Vienna. There was no other reason, there seldom has been a better reason, for the selection of any ruler of British India.

The next time the Sepoys showed their teeth was in 1841 at Cabool, when Sir Alexander Burnes, Sir William M'Naghten, and about twenty-six thousand other persons were massacred, with the sanction of the Foreign Office and the Board of Control. In 1850, again, the 66th Regiment of Bengal Native Infantry were disbanded for mutiny ; and signs of dis-

content might have been seen smouldering everywhere within our dominion.

The natives had long been disaffected, for they smarted under the most amazing and contemptible tyranny which has ever ground the bodies and souls of men for greed. We never sent out one single man of real note and importance, who had a character and fortune at home, to govern the largest dependency ever possessed by any nation. We handed it over to our small-minded middle class, and gave it wholly up to a grasping mercantile Company, who neither knew nor cared anything for Hindostan and its 176,000,000 souls save for their marketable value.

It was quite true, as Mr. Brown had observed with plebeian envy, that noblemen were allowed to fill the higher offices of state, and had some scanty scraps of patronage at their disposal ; but they were only dummies or lay figures ; and no viceroy of India, with the exception of Clive and Hastings, who were both Company's men, ever wielded any real authority. Lord Pigot was imprisoned by his own council, and died of the shame and anger of his confinement ; and from the time when a

Captain Keigwin invested himself with the government of Bombay till that when the Company dismissed a peer from their service for not having publicly saluted them as 'Honourable Sirs,' the British rule in India had been confided almost exclusively to tradespeople, with the thoughts, desires, and education of tradespeople, determined to make money, no matter how, no matter where, no matter when. They appointed their sons and brothers and nephews to wield absolute sway over vast kingdoms and principalities ; stipulating only that they should remit a sufficient amount of taxes to Leadenhall Street. They did not call their relatives by the names of monarchs ; on the contrary, the immense and uncontrolled authority bestowed upon them was hidden under the modest appellation of resident, collector, agent, or secretary. They never went beyond some of these discreet titles, and were fond of adding the qualifying adjective 'sub,' 'sub-assistant,' 'under,' 'officiating under,' and even 'deputy-sub-assistant-officiating-under-agent,' of an occult power not named, in order to conceal themselves still more effectually. One officer of considerable importance even went so far as

to call himself 'deputy-assistant acting resident in the Persian Gulf,' where it would have seemed impossible to go and look for him; but he was above ground, and a troublesome person in his way too for those who thwarted him—indeed a colonel in the twenties who had risen rapidly because his mother was a director's cook and housekeeper; and the director had poisoned many of the far Chinese with opium. It is now known, though it was long and impudently denied, that torture was systematically employed to wrench from a peasantry poorer than that of Greece or Portugal, taxes which could not have been paid by the graziers of Lincolnshire or the vinegrowers of the Gironde. Madras and Rangoon were fired by despairing hands worked to the bone by ruthless taskmasters, and crowds of bankrupt wretches weary of life voluntarily perished in the flames. Famine smote whole provinces again and again, as their miserable populations writhed under cruel extortioners. Those active and remorseless taxgatherers seized not only shawls and jewels, hoards and horses, fruit and cattle, but the very seed corn which was the life of their slaves; till the smug traders in

one district alone (Oriassa) caused the death by hunger of fifteen hundred thousand persons.

But the British pedlars made money—much of it, and purchased many coronets and fine estates with it in England and elsewhere. The sturdy hucksters were very proud too of their power and achievements. They had quite a picturesque language of their own. They described themselves as griffins, and vultures, and lions. They included all the descendants of the Khilgis and of Toghlak, of Genghis Khan and of Timurlenk, under the generic name of ‘niggers.’ They had a good deal of dry humour about them; and many of them were sharp and resolute gentlemen who wrote admirable despatches, not unlike special pleaders’ speeches, whenever they were called upon for explanations. The student of history, however, looks in vain among the Woods, Roes, Hartlands, Hobarts, Hislops, Shores, Bayleys, Elliots, Birds, Greys, and Cheapes for a single statesman whose sayings or doings posterity has deigned to preserve. From the establishment of the first British factory at Surat in 1612, to the partial termination of the Commercial Govern-

ment of British India on September 1, 1858, all is a blank.

So there is upon the whole nothing astonishing in the fact that the 'Bombay Gazette,' a newspaper published under Commercial Government inspiration, should have announced on May 1, 1857, 'India is quiet throughout,' and that just nine days afterwards another mutiny should have begun at Meerut. Upon the same day, as a pungent practical commentary upon the foresight of Commercial Government occupied in collecting taxes by torture, the mutineers seized Delhi, and proclaimed a nigger emperor as the lawful successor of Arungzebe.

Of course the revolt originated in an official blunder. Upon the death of Bajee Rao, ex-Peishwa of the Mahrattas, some mole-eyed mercantile man at the India Office refused the claim of his nephew Nana Sahib for the continuance of the pension assigned to him. Now it is quite possible for an irresponsible person to commit any high-handed act with impunity, as far as he himself is concerned ; but somebody is sure to suffer for it, whenever such a man as Nana Sahib is mishandled. Scorning all discus-

sion with the clerk, he placed himself silently at the head of the malcontents of his own people, and soon found a war cry.

It had happened that somebody, wanting a contract, had introduced a new sort of musket from England into India, and it was necessary to load this gun with greased cartridges, which were an abomination to the native soldiers. All the money, however, which could be made out of the contract for muskets and cartridges having been made, nobody objected to a new contract for other guns and other cartridges, and those in use were immediately ordered to be discontinued. But this did not pacify Nana Sahib. Then, as the Commercial Government of India had created a very astute and powerful enemy, it disbanded thirty thousand of its troops, who immediately joined him; it also hung one Sepoy private and one Sepoy officer, as a terrible example; and immediately afterwards thirty-four regiments were lost to the British flag. Moreover, having fully resolved, in January 1857, to change the greasy cartridges, upon the 9th of May following, or more than three months afterwards, Commercial Government committed eighty-five troopers of

the 3rd Bengal Native Cavalry to prison for not using them. The next day these eighty-five troopers killed their commanding officer, Colonel Finnis, fired their barracks, and rode away to Nana Sahib on Commercial Government's horses. At the end of June, no less than twenty-one cities were in rebellion against the unknown clerk, who had refused Nana Sahib's claim for the money which he claimed ; and at nine of those places the very European women and children were massacred, so fierce was the wrath of Bajee Rao's nephew at the high-handed dealings of the clerk. That irresponsible official likewise caused the proclamation of a public fast, and 280,749*l.* were subscribed for the widows and orphans which the clerk had made. The command in chief of the Queen's troops in India had been given to a well-known London man, who dressed exceedingly well. He knew little of soldiering beyond mounting guard at St. James's Palace ; he marched at once to Delhi, and got killed. He could do no more, honest gentleman.

The Punjaub was saved by an obscure person, bearing the ancient name of Montgomery, who somehow or other came at once to the front ;

and the old warrior line of the Irish Neills was notably represented. Then it occurred to somebody that the newspapers, which had been rejoicing, in their best leaded types, over the quietude of India, were rather too free, and the liberty of the press was restricted, in the firm belief that Nana Sahib would be put down that way. The plan did not answer, however ; and Messrs. Mangles and Co., East India Directors, who had insisted that the only way to stifle a rebellion was not to tell the truth about it were astounded. Another general soon followed the man of fashion to an untimely finish before Delhi ; and he was succeeded by a third general, who bore the ill-omened name of Reed, and was promptly beaten by the 'niggers,' being the first British officer who had come to signal grief since General Whish. Wilson had not much better luck, and we got horribly beaten by niggers at Arrah ; but that Irish Prince, O'Neill, turned up again when our affairs were at worst, and won a sort of victory for us. A hard-fisted Baptist, too, with nothing of the mercantile man in him, and who had been very ill-treated by Commercial Government in consequence, stepped suddenly forward,

and showed some of the old, patient, heroic stuff which was seen in Cromwell's Ironsides. His name was Havelock, and he had been called 'Old Phlos' at that famous Charterhouse School which has bred some of the best of the Anglo-Indians. He had just relieved Lucknow, where Irish Neill was killed, when General Violet arrived with reinforcements from England, some apprehension of the true state of the case having at last reached Leadenhall Street, and stirred up everybody there but the clerk who had first done the mischief. His name even has never been published to this day, though it is tolerably well known.

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